

A RESOURCE GUIDE TO STANDARD HANDEL OPERA ROLES FOR THE
COUNTERTENOR

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Italian *opera seria* gradually fell out of favor during Handel's lifetime, and remained untouched and unheard for almost two centuries. The first Handel operatic revival took place in the early 1920s in Germany, and by the 1960s Handel's operas began to reach a wider audience due to several famed singers: Joan Sutherland, Beverly Sills, and Marilyn Horne, each of whom was known for programming Handel's virtuosic arias on their solo recitals. Many large opera companies went on to produce full Handel operas as vehicles for these famed singers. Since then, there has been steadily growing interest in performing complete versions of Handel's operas. While modern opera companies regularly program the more popular Handel operas, i.e. *Giulio Cesare*, *Alcina*, *Ariodante*, *Serse*, *Rodelinda*, *Rinaldo* and *Orlando*, several summer festivals have taken the lead in producing Handel's lesser-known operas, thus opening the eyes of the opera-going public to the great depth and variety of this composer's works.

Handel composed within the conventions of Italian *opera seria*, giving the majority of leading male roles to soprano and alto castrati. Most of these roles were heroic in nature, and reserved for the most popular castrati, who were renowned for their expressivity and breath control. Out of his thirty-nine full-length operas, Handel composed sixty roles for the castrato voice: forty-five for the alto castrato, and fifteen for the soprano castrato. In revivals during Handel's lifetime when no castrato was available, a female would always replace a castrato. There is not one confirmed instance of a castrato role, or even an aria ever being sung by a tenor or a bass. Although there were some exceptions, tenors and basses were mostly confined to singing the roles of old men, tyrants and servants. While Handel never composed female roles for male singers,

he composed twenty-six male roles for female singers, lending credence to Winton Dean's suggestion that when Handel composed for an alto castrato, he wrote for an alto first and a castrato second.¹

Over the past fifty years, together with a renewed interest in historical performance practice of early music and baroque opera in specific, countertenors trained in North America and Europe have steadily emerged at a world-class technical and artistic level, showing themselves capable and worthy of filling the void left by the demise of the castrati. Mezzo-sopranos have also become specialists in this repertoire and are still seen by most as the best choice to sing the roles originally written for the soprano castrati. As for the male roles written in the alto range, the choice to use a countertenor serves to both preserve the sex of the character, thus maintaining credibility in the drama, as well as provides a richer palate of vocal color among a cast containing mostly treble voices.

With these developments in mind, I have created a resource dedicated to the study of castrato roles appropriate for the modern-day countertenor voice. This document seeks to create a practical repository of information concerning the standard Handel opera roles which could be sung by countertenors. It is designed to be a tool for aspiring countertenors and the teachers who will be training them. It also examines the necessary vocal and dramatic qualities required for each of the various roles.

¹ Winton Dean, *Handel's operas, 1704–1726* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 21

The largest determining factor in defining the repertoire most suitable for a countertenor is vocal range and tessitura. While there are some exceptions, the typical range of male roles written for alto castrati and female altos lies between A4 - E5 and the tessitura lies for the most part on the lower half of the treble staff and slightly below it. In the twenty-first century we have begun to see a small number of countertenors capable of singing a few of the male roles originally conceived for soprano castrati or female sopranos, i.e. Sesto in *Giulio Cesare*. This role has a range and tessitura that extends as high as G5. It will be interesting to see whether the future will reveal countertenors capable of singing leading roles hitherto reserved for the mezzo-soprano, i.e. Ariodante, Serse and Ruggiero (*Alcina*), Teseo (*Arianna in Creta*).

In deciding whether a role is the right fit for a particular countertenor, the singer will need to take the following issues into account: range, tessitura, difficulty of coloratura, vocal contour of melodic line, required strength and clarity of lower range and the suitability of the role to the singer's age and dramatic capabilities. Other issues to consider will be dependent upon the production. These include accompaniment (piano, modern or baroque orchestra), baroque or modern pitch, size of the house, vocal weight and color of other singers involved, cuts to the score and whether there is a willingness on the part of the company to transpose or substitute arias for the singer.

Of Handel's forty-one operas, only eight currently exist in the standard repertoire: *Agrippina*, *Alcina*, *Ariodante*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Orlando*, *Rinaldo*, *Rodelinda* and *Serse*. Of these eight operas, all except *Alcina* contain at least one role which today is often sung by

a countertenor. For the seven remaining operas, I have compiled detailed information about each of the possible countertenor roles, including musical and technical demands for each role, character description, background on the singer for whom the role was written and the other roles Handel composed for this singer. I have listed all the arias for each countertenor role in order as they appear in the drama. I have also included general information such as act and scene, key of aria, meter, tempo (when given), range, tessitura, instrumentation, approximate duration, various emotions associated with the aria, the dramatic situation of the scene and an English translation of the aria taken from Nico Castel's *Handel Opera Libretti*.

Standard Handel Operatic Repertoire and Corresponding Countertenor Roles

Opera	Role	# of Arias (Ensembles)
1. <i>Agrippina</i> (1709)	Ottone (a)	7
	Narciso (a)	2
2. <i>Rinaldo</i> (1711)	Rinaldo (mz)	8 (2 duets)
	Goffredo (a)	5
	Eustazio (a)	5
	Mago Cristiano (a)	1
3. <i>Giulio Cesare</i> (1724)	Cesare (a)	8 (1 duet)
	Tolomeo (a)	4
	Nireno (a)	0
	Sesto (s)	6 (1 duet)
4. <i>Rodelinda</i> (1725)	Bertarido (a)	7 (1 duet)
	Unulfo (a)	3
5. <i>Orlando</i> (1733)	Orlando (a)	8 (1 duet)
	Medoro (mz)	3 (1 trio)
6. <i>Ariodante</i> (1735)	Polinesso (a)	4
7. <i>Serse</i> (1738)	Arsamene (mz)	7 (1 duet)

Organization of Data and Definition of Terms

First performance: Name of theater, city and exact date of premiere

Librettist: In the baroque era libretti were often set by numerous composers and revised and edited based upon the desires of a theater's impresario or of the composer himself. Provided is the author of the original libretto, followed by the author who revised the libretto for Handel's production.

Standard Countertenor Roles: Listed in order of importance is the name of the role, abbreviation of voice type and the singer who originated the role.

Musical and technical demands: Number of arias assigned to the role and their distribution in each act of the opera. When applicable I have also included the number of ensembles and accompanied recitatives. In describing the technical demands of each role I address issues that should be considered by any singer before deciding to perform a role. These issues include the overall range and tessitura, accompanying instrumental texture, aspects of melodic contour, coloratura demands and vocal color.

Character description: A description of the dramatic relevance of the role in the opera and development of character throughout the course of the opera.

Singer who originated the role: This section includes performance background of the singer, other operatic roles specifically written for the singer by Handel, the vocal range in which Handel wrote for them and critical comments the singer received by his/her contemporaries.

Arias: Title of each aria and act and scene in which the aria is located.

Tempo: In some cases Handel did not indicate a tempo. In these cases I have provided a suggested tempo marking.

Key and Meter: Original key and meter composed for the premiere performance.

Range: The lowest and highest pitches in the vocal line of the aria.

Tessitura: The span of notes within which the majority of the vocal line has been set. If the pitch is of a significant duration as well as written twice in the course of the aria, I have included it in the tessitura.

Orchestration: Abbreviation of instrumentation for each aria is provided. When marked “tutti” this means that oboes double the upper string parts except where notated in the score.

Form: All arias are da capo or dal segno in form unless otherwise stated.

Prevailing emotions: I have provided several emotions for each aria that are either directly stated in the text or may be implied in the situation. This allows the reader to immediately connect with the main *Affekt* as well as to consider the emotional spectrum of the aria.

Approximate duration: The approximate duration of the aria in its full form. When specified in the title, the timing includes the preceding accompanied recitative.

Dramatic situation: This section gives the dramatic background of the scene as revealed in the recitative preceding the aria.

Translation: English translations are direct citations from Nico's Castel's two volumes of *Handel Opera Libretti*, in which he provides word for word translations for the entire libretto of the opera as well as often a modified translation

Chapter 1

Agrippina

First Performance:

Teatro San Giovanni Gristomo, Venice on December 26, 1709

Librettist:

Vincenzo Grimani

Standard Countertenor Roles:

Ottone (a) - Francesca Vanini-Boschi

Narciso (a) - Giuliano Albertini

Ottone

Musical and technical demands: Seven arias (one in Act I, four in Act II, two in Act III), final coro

All of Ottone's arias lie in the low and middle range for the countertenor voice with only occasional trips into the upper range; therefore a strong bridge between registers is necessary. None of Ottone's arias are bravura in nature but consist more of short to medium phrases of either stepwise motion and/or movement of thirds with occasional wide leaps of up to a sixth. Three of his arias contain short bursts of coloratura made up of combinations of eighth and sixteenth note movement as well as short thirty-second note flourishes. The longest phrases of coloratura come in arias with slow to moderate tempi. This easily allows for catching a quick breath without disrupting

the melodic contour. The instrumental texture is on the light side with two arias accompanied only by basso continuo. At times Ottone's melodic line is doubled with unison violins, so agreement in articulation and tempo is necessary. The longest and most challenging of his arias, and in my opinion the most rewarding, is a slow lament, "Voi che udite il mio lamento", which comes in Act II. It is preceded by a dramatic, accompanied recitative. The aria unfolds with a dense and contrapuntal instrumental texture. The vocal line ascends chromatically from the lower register, requiring a clear, well-focused sound in order to carry over the orchestra. Careful attention to tuning is necessary due to the prevalence of dissonances, and a steady tempo with clean articulation is obligatory in the melismatic passage, as it is doubled by oboe.

Character description: Ottone is the commander of the imperial army and in love with Poppea. Near the beginning of the opera he is told that he will be rewarded with the succession for having saved Emperor Claudio's life. As the plot unfolds it becomes apparent that Ottone is not the brave hero but is instead the unlucky and even tragic hero, manipulated and used as a pawn by the other characters. He is the only character in the opera that always acts responsibly and with honor.

Singer who originated the role: Ottone is one of many male roles that Handel wrote for a woman. Italian contralto, Francesca Vanini-Boschi possessed strong low notes but limited range. Tosi praised her ability "of introducing graces without transgressing against time". She was one of the singers that Handel brought with him to London in

1710, although by then her voice was in decline. The other role Handel composed for her was also a male role, Goffredo, general of the Christian army, in *Rinaldo*.

Arias:

1. “Lusinghiera mia speranza”

Act I, Scene 13

Tempo marking: Staccato (Moderato)

Key and Meter: D minor – 4/4

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: C4 - C5

Orchestration: “Tutti” Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, anxiety, trust, doubt

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Ottone confides in Agrippina that his desire and love for Poppea is stronger than the promised reward of the throne. Agrippina falsely agrees to intercede on his behalf. Left alone, Ottone is astounded that in one day he has both won the hand of his beloved and the throne. He rejoices in the success of his hopes and asks that fate will not change.

Translation: (A) Flattering hope, my soul do not deceive! (B) Oh fate, so serene in appearance, do not change your fair countenance.²

² Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 1 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 163.

2. “Coronato il crin d’alloro”

Act II, Scene 2

Tempo marking: none given (Allegro moderato)

Key and Meter: F major – 4/4

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlns, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: excitement, happiness, pride, anxious

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Two of Agrippina’s suitors, Pallante and Narciso, are present when Ottone enters singing to himself. Expectant of his coming reward, Ottone reveals his greater desire to be united with his beloved Poppea. Although a public aria, Ottone sings to himself, as if alone in his thoughts, thus allowing the audience to see the irony of the situation that follows.

Translation: (A) Crowned my brow with my laurel (wreath) I shall stand in the capitol.

(B) But [Poppea], the beauty I adore, means more to me than the crown and throne.³

3. “Voi che udite il mio lamento”

Act II, Scene 5

Tempo marking: none given (Lento)

Key and Meter: C minor – 4/4

Range: B flat 3 – C5

³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 184.

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Oboe solo, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: shock, powerless, despair, contempt

Approx. duration: 7:00 (with accompanied recitative)

Dramatic situation: Ottone is awestruck after being denounced as a traitor by Claudio, who has been deceived by Agrippina. He appeals in vain to each of his confidants and, left alone on stage, reproaches the emperor, his friends and Poppea for their unjust accusations. He then addresses the audience asking them to pity his complaint and share in his grief.

Translation: (A) You who hear my laments, share my grief. (B) I lose a throne and yet I despise it, but that treasure that so greatly I prize, alas, for to lose it is a torment that disturbs my heart.⁴

4. “Vaghe fonti”

Act II, Scene 7

Tempo marking: none given (Andante)

Key and Meter: F major – 3/4

Range: C4 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: 2 Recorders, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC (senza cembalo)

Form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: sadness, disappointment, loneliness

⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 194–195.

Approx. duration: 1:30

Dramatic situation: In a garden Poppea wishes for Ottone's innocence. Seeing him approach she feigns being asleep, hoping to find out the reason for his alleged betrayal and to hear of his remorse. Ottone enters sad and pensive, singing to the fountains of their beauty. Seeing Poppea asleep, he abruptly interrupts his aria.

Translation: (A) You lovely springs, that snake about, murmuring among the bosom of the grass.⁵

5. "Ti vo' giusta e non pietosa"

Act II, Scene 7

Tempo marking: none given (Allegretto)

Key and Meter: E flat major – 4/4

Range: B flat 3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: courage, confidence, anxiety, desperation

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: After making another appeal to Poppea to believe him, Ottone offers her his sword, requesting her to kill him if she really believes him to be guilty. Ottone finds out from Poppea that Agrippina betrayed his trust. Poppea, not sure whom to believe, chooses to suspend her decision and invites Ottone to come later to her

⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 196.

apartments where she may be able discern the truth. Ottone pleads with Poppea to continue searching out the truth of his heart.

Translation: (A) I want you (to be) just and not merciful, my lovely one, in judging me.

(B) I am absolutely, totally innocent; if then you find (that) my heart was lying, I forgive you if you condemn me.⁶

6. “Tacerò, pur che fedele”

Act III, Scene 2

Tempo marking: none given (Andante)

Key and Meter: D minor – 3/8

Range: B flat 3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: optimism, anxiety, self-pity, longing

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: In her chamber Poppea assures Ottone of her love. She tells him to hide and to contain his jealousy no matter what he may hear. Ottone responds singing “I will be silent, as long as you truly love me. I will endure, even though your coldness may be against me.”

Translation: (A) I will be quiet, as long as faithful in your heart you keep (my) love,

(B) I will suffer even though your cruel rigor be against me.⁷

⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 201–202.

⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 220.

7. “Pur ch’io ti stringa al sen”

Act III, Scene 10

Tempo marking: none given (Siciliano)

Key and Meter: G minor - 12/8

Range: B flat 3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlns, BC

Prevailing emotions: relief, joy, adoration, longing

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: After Poppea succeeds in her scheme of revealing the devious plots of Claudio and Nerone, she reaffirms her love and devotion to Ottone, who in turn declares his unending love. He states that she alone is his life and joy and without her life is only pain and torment.

Translation: (A) As long as I may clasp you to my breast, my dear and sweet beloved, I am content. (B) Without you, my heart, is everything in me grief, everything is torment.⁸

Narciso

Musical demands: Two arias (one in Act I, one in Act II and in Act III there are a few short utterances of secco recitative in duet with Pallante), final coro

This role is a good first role for a beginning countertenor since both arias are short, sparse in texture, moderate in tempo and do not require extreme demands of breath control, coloratura or range. The tessitura primarily sits in the middle and lower registers

⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 234.

with short unaccented trips into the upper register. The melodic contour of the role consists of step-wise and triadic motion with an occasional ascending leap and sustained notes requiring messa di voce.

Character description: Predominantly a comic character, Narciso is a freedman and suitor to Agrippina. He often shares the stage with Agrippina's other suitor, Pallante, a baritone. Both characters are treated as pawns by Agrippina. She makes false promises to both in the attempt to secure the throne for her son, Nerone. Narciso tends to be the more plaintive and sensitive of the two suitors and Handel's use of light-textured orchestrations in both his arias underscores this idea.

Singer who originated the role: Italian alto castrato Giuliano Albertini flourished between the years 1699 and 1738. He had a long career in Florence singing in operas by Orlandini, Gasparini and Albinoni, and was also employed by both the Cardinal and Grand Duchess of Tuscany. He sang operas in other cities throughout Italy including Naples, Bologna, Modena and Venice. It was while in Venice that he first worked with Handel, singing the role of Narciso in *Agrippina*. The compass of his range was from A3 – D5.⁹

⁹ Winton Dean, "Albertini, Giuliano," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

Arias

1. “Volo pronto”

Act I, Scene 5

Tempo marking: none given (Allegro moderato)

Key and Meter: F major – 3/8

Range: B flat 3 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Recorder 1, Recorder 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: joyful, exuberant, hopeful, infatuation

Approx. duration: 3:30

Dramatic situation: Having just met with his rival suitor Pallante, Narciso now has his turn to pay suit to Agrippina. As with Pallante, Agrippina pretends to accept Narciso's proposal in order to gain his loyalty. In response, Narciso sings that his heart is now light at the prospect of happiness and that he is willing to comply with whatever she wishes.

Translation: (A) I fly right away and happy my heart is anticipating my happiness

(B) I shall fly from place to place upon the wings of my love, and with that fervent fire of mine, I shall satisfy your wish.¹⁰

2. “Spererò, poichè mel dice “

Act II, Scene 16

Tempo marking: none given (Moderato)

Key and Meter: D minor – 4/4

¹⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 150.

Range: C4 –C5

Tessitura: C4 –C5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: anxiety, hope, longing, infatuation

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: Narciso is told by Agrippina that he must kill both Ottone and Pallante if he is to gain her love. Narciso responds with an aria of blind and foolish trust. (Just before the aria begins he comments, as an aside, “This woman has the soul of a wild beast.”)

Translation: (A) I shall hope because she tells me to, oh august lady with the lovely lips.

(B) And if I hope to be happy, my hope, it is well deserved.¹¹

¹¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 210.

Chapter 2

Rinaldo

First Performance:

Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, London, February 24th, 1711

Librettist:

Giacomo Rossi - scenario by Aaron Hill, loosely based on Torquato Tasso's

Gerusalemme libertata

Standard Countertenor Roles:

Rinaldo (a) – Nicolo Grimaldi “Nicolini”

Goffredo (a) – Francesca Vanini-Boschi

Eustazio (a) – Valentino Urbani

Mago Christiano (a) – Giuseppe Cassani

Rinaldo

Musical demands: Eight arias (four in Act I, two in Act II, two in Act III), two duets (one in Act I, one in Act II), final coro

The biggest challenge of this role is the sheer amount of singing required. The first act is the most demanding with a duet and four da capo arias, three of which come in rather swift succession. The range of the role is A3 – F5 and the tessitura lies roughly between B3 – E5. If sung in the original key, Rinaldo has a slightly higher tessitura than most of the other standard countertenor roles but there are also key moments that dip

down into the lower register, for example the final aria, “Or la tromba”. It is noteworthy that in the 1731 revision of *Rinaldo*, Handel transposed several of Rinaldo’s arias down a whole step for famed alto castrato, Senesino, for example “Cara sposa” (D minor down from E minor), “Il Tricebero umiliato” (C minor down from D minor) and the duet with Armida. The coloratura demands for the role include medium to long passages of sixteenth note melismas, as found in “Venti turbini”, “Abrucio, avvampo e fremito” and “Or la tromba” and eighth-note triplet melismas that incorporate a variety of skips and repeated notes, as found in “E un incendio fra due venti”. The instrumental texture for Rinaldo’s arias varies from light and transparent to thick and full. The lightest is “Il Tricebero umiliato” in which the violins double the voice at the unison throughout the entire aria. The thickest texture is found in the final bravura aria, “Or la tromba”, accompanied by four trumpets, oboes, strings and timpani. This aria is particularly challenging as it comes at the very end of the opera. It requires brilliance in timbre to cut through the thick texture of the orchestra, which includes four trumpets. It also demands extreme flexibility and evenness of production to facilitate the many skips and shifts between registers.

Character description: Rinaldo is the most heroic and valued of Christian soldiers and he is in love with General Goffredo’s daughter, Almirena. He has been promised her hand in marriage upon victory in the siege of Jerusalem. Rinaldo’s character for the most part is one-dimensional except when he is under the magical charms of the sorceress, Armida. Throughout the opera, Rinaldo is resolved in mind and spirit to prove his worthiness to Goffredo, but when faced with the trial of losing Almirena he reveals a

more tender and devoted side to his character. Rinaldo continually summons up his courage to return to his quest for Almirena's hand. The only lapse in his display of courage and duty occurs when he is beguiled by the sirens, who lure him away from Goffredo's army with the belief he will be able to rescue Almirena. The secret weapon of Goffredo's army, Rinaldo is undefeatable on the battlefield, yet his sole impetus to fight is firmly tied to a stronger desire to win Almirena's hand in marriage. Even when faced with the lustful ardor of Armida, Rinaldo's devotion to Almirena remains constant.

Singer who originated the role: Italian alto castrato Nicolo Grimaldi, also known as Nicolini, is credited in part for the increase of popularity of Italian opera in London. While in Italy, he appeared frequently in operas, particularly those of Alessandro Scarlatti, Pollaro, Bononcini, Lotti, Leo, Porpora, Albinoni, Caldara, Gasparini and Vinci. In 1708 at the age of 35 he was brought to London, making his debut at the Queen's theatre in an arrangement of Scarlatti's *Pirro e Demetrio*. While in London he sang his first role for Handel, the title role in *Rinaldo*. He returned again in 1715 to sing another title role in Handel's *Amadigi*. Both Rinaldo and Amadigi require exceptional agility and breath control with a range from A3 – F5. Nicolini was noted as an outstanding all-around artist and the fact that he sang until his death speaks to a solid vocal technique. Music historian Charles Burney cited him as "a great singer and still greater actor." Joseph Addison called him "the greatest performer of dramatic Music that is now living or perhaps that ever appeared on the stage."¹²

¹² Winton Dean, "Nicolini," in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 345.

Arias

1. “Ogni indugio d’un amante”

Act I, Scene 1

Tempo marking: none given (allegro moderato)

Key and Meter: G minor – 4/4

Range: D4 – E flat5

Tessitura: D4 – E flat5

Orchestration: Unison Vlns, BC

Prevailing emotions: exasperation, frustration

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: Rinaldo’s desire to marry Goffredo’s daughter Almirena is put on hold. Goffredo urges Rinaldo to prove his loyalty by continuing in battle for the conquest of Jerusalem. He warns Rinaldo “the torch of cupid often cools the passion for war”.

Translation: (A) Every delay by a lover is a pain bitter and awful. (B) Fear always lashes it, hope with it jests and now my soul feels it.¹³

2. “Cara sposa”

Act I, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: E minor – 3/4

Range: B3 – E5

Tessitura: B3 – E5

¹³ Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 1 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 348–349.

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: sadness, shock, despair, fury

Approx. duration: 10:00

Dramatic situation: Rinaldo and Almirena, having just exchanged promises of love, are suddenly interrupted by the sorceress Armida. Using her magical powers, Armida abducts Almirena, leaving Rinaldo alone. Powerless and ashamed for not having been able to defend his beloved, Rinaldo laments his loss and vows to rescue her.

Translation: (A) Dear betrothed, mistress beloved, where are you? Let my tears bring you back to me. (B) Evil spirits, I will defy you with the fire of my wrath on your altar of Erebus.¹⁴

3. “Cor ingrato, ti rammenbri”

Act I, Scene 8

Tempo marking: Adagio

Key and Meter: C minor – 4/4

Range: C4 – E flat5

Tessitura: C4 – E flat5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: shame, fury

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: Rinaldo recounts the story of Almirena’s abduction to Goffredo and Eustazio and then out of shame and fury laments again.

¹⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 358. In Greek mythology, Erebus is the son of Chaos and brother of Night; hence darkness personified.

Translation: (A) Heart ungrateful, can you remember and not burst with grief?

(B) But if struck dumb you seem, be awakened by my fury!¹⁵

4. “Venti, turbini prestate le vostre ali”

Act I, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: D4 – E5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Violin solo, Bassoon solo, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, courage

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: After receiving encouragement from Eustazio, Rinaldo, left alone, prays for wings like Cupid so he may hasten to his beloved’s rescue.

Translation: (A) Winds, whirlwinds, lend your wings to my feet. (B) Heavens, gods, put weapons in my arm against those who caused me sorrow.¹⁶

5. “Il Tricerbero umiliato”

Act II, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: D minor – 2/2

Range: A3 – F5

¹⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 359.

¹⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 362.

Tessitura: A3 – E5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: pride, courage, valor

Approx. duration: 2:00

Dramatic situation: Rinaldo is invited by three Sirens, who claim they have been sent by Almirena to lead him to the island where she is being held captive. Both Eustazio and Goffredo attempt to warn Rinaldo that it is a trap, but Rinaldo disregards their advice and follows boldly, proclaiming that he is unafraid to fight for his beloved.

Translation: (A) That three-headed Cerberus, humbled, to my sword I shall lay low;

(B) And down in Hades I shall renew the lofty fate of Alcibiades.¹⁷

6. “Abruzzo, avvampo e fremo”

Act II, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: B3 – E5

Tessitura: D4 – E5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: rage, doubt, war-like zeal

Approx. duration: 2:30

¹⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 367–368. Cerberus, the three-headed watch dog that guards the entrance of the infernal regions. Alcibiades, a Greek political power, known for his bold military exploits.

Dramatic situation: As a prisoner in Armida's palace, Rinaldo scornfully refuses her offering of love. Armida tricks him into embracing her by magically appearing in the form of Almirena. While embracing Rinaldo, Armida reassumes her true form only to be reviled. She then again takes the shape of Almirena causing Rinaldo to become doubtful and enraged.

Translation: (A) I burn, I flare up, and I tremble with rage and with fury. (B) I hope, but always fear an infernal deception.¹⁸

7. "È un incendio fra due venti"

Act III, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: F major – 3/4

Range: C4 – E5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: courage, zeal, pride

Approx. duration: 4:15

Dramatic situation: After Rinaldo rescues Almirena from certain death at the hands of Armida, Goffredo quickly reminds Rinaldo that while their hellish foe has been defeated, there still exists an earthly foe to conquer. Rinaldo again assumes the role of valiant warrior and zealously returns to his duty of conquering Jerusalem.

¹⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 380.

Translation: (A) My heart is like a fire between two winds and two flames. (B) Glory feeds it, and it is nourished by a steadfast love.¹⁹

8. “Or la tromba in suon festante”

Act III, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: D major – 4/4

Range: A3 – E5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tpt 3, Tpt 4, Timp, Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: zeal, pride, courage

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: After sharing his battle plan with Goffredo, Rinaldo predicts future conquests with the rewards of both love and glory.

Translation: (A) Now the trumpet with sound festive summons me to triumph.

(B) Glory and Love will crown me as a happy warrior and lover.²⁰

Goffredo

Musical demands: Four arias (two in Act I, one in Act II and one in Act III), final coro

The range of the role is from B flat 3 – E5 and the overall tessitura lies between C3 – D5. Similar to the range required of Rinaldo, Goffredo lies a bit higher than Eustazio. One aesthetic issue is the need of a robust and mature vocal color to match the

¹⁹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 396.

²⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 404.

characterization of father and general. The challenges in singing Goffredo lie primarily in the allegro tempi of three of his four arias. Each possesses a strong and rigid character with lots of words, thus requiring crisp, clear declamation and vocal articulation. The orchestral writing of his first two arias are “tutti” thus necessitating a full and clear sound throughout both the low and high registers. Coloratura passages are medium to long in duration with both scalar and leaping contour and at times possessing sharp dotted rhythms. Goffredo’s one lyric aria, “Sorge nel petto” comes in the third act and is ravishingly tender and vulnerable, traits hitherto unseen in his character. The accompanying texture is just basso continuo except for the closing ritornello in which the upper strings are added.

Character description: Goffredo is General of the Christian army in the first crusade against the Saracens, and father to Almirena, with whom Rinaldo is in love. Goffredo is for the most part a one dimensional character, fully devoted to his faith, focused solely on his crusading duties, warning those under him that it is not with joy, pleasure or contentment that glory is gained, but rather through fervent prayer and duty. He is shrewd in his dealings with Rinaldo, holding out the hope of marriage to his daughter in order to keep Rinaldo in his service. All of what Goffredo says has a lofty, zealous and pious ring to it.

Singer who originated the role: Francesca Vanini-Boschi (See Ottone in *Agrippina*)

Arias

1. “Sovra balze scoscesi e pungenti”

Act I, Scene 1

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: F major – 3/8

Range: B flat³ – D⁵

Tessitura: D⁴ – D⁵

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: pride, sternness, pomposity

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Outside the gates of Jerusalem Goffredo is with his daughter, Almirena, his brother Eustazio, Rinaldo, and his troops. He looks forward to further victory in their crusade, and warns Rinaldo that only through hardship and fervent prayer will they be successful.

Translation: (A) Glory has its temple only on rocky and windy hills. (B) Not with joy, pleasure or contentment does one go to offer fervent prayers.²¹

2. “No, che quest’alma scontenti non dà”

Act I, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: D⁴ – E⁵

²¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 345–346.

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, Unison Obs, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: pride, self-confidence, self-satisfaction

Approx. duration: 2:45

Dramatic situation: Argante comes before Goffredo to ask for a three-day truce.

Goffredo takes the opportunity to show his enemy that he is honorable and thus grants his request.

Translation: (A) No, it is not in my soul to create discontent, my soul only wishes for peaceful tranquility. (B) For a noble heart finds the path of glory, one of delight.²²

3. “Mio cor, che mi sai dir”

Act II, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G minor – 4/4

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C#4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: stress, hope, pride, courage

Approx. duration: 3:15

Dramatic situation: Having fallen into Armida’s trap, Rinaldo abandons Goffredo and Eustazio to rescue Almirena. Confounded, Goffredo attributes the incident to the powers

²² Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 352.

of hell. In turn, he focuses his energy to following his faith and virtue to reinvigorate his hope.

Translation: (A) My heart, how can you advise me? Victory or death, yes I hear you.

(B) My honor may falter but hope leads me to expect peace.²³

4. “Sorge nel petto”

Act III, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Adagio

Key and Meter: D major – 3/4

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: C#4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, trust, serenity

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Having now rescued Almirena from Armida, Goffredo reminds Eustazio and Rinaldo that their duty is still not complete. After ordering Eustazio to prepare the troops for battle and chastising Rinaldo for having followed his carnal desires, Goffredo sings of an approaching victory.

Translation: (A) There arises in my breast a certain delight which lovely calm promises to my heart. (B) After these ordeals, our reward shall be to gain the palm of victory for our valor.²⁴

²³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 369.

²⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 395–396.

Eustazio

Musical demands: Four arias (two in Act I, one in Act II, one in Act III), final coro

The range for this role is A3 – D5 with the tessitura lying mostly within a single octave, C3 – C4. All four arias are da capo or dal segno in form, thus requiring ornamentation. Overall demands include vocal flexibility and a clear, strong presence in the lower and middle registers. Coloratura demands vary between medium and long passages of lilting eighth note triplets. Such is the case in “Col valor” and “Di Sion” and a mixture of both triplet and sixteenth note motion in his first aria, “Sulla ruota di fortuna”. His one lyrical aria, “Siam prossimi” has a long and slow lilting melodic contour demanding exceptional breath control and dynamic shading. Instrumental texture for the role is on the light side. Both his first and third arias are accompanied solely by continuo, and in the last aria, upper strings and continuo. The thickest instrumental texture comes in “Col valor” with violins and oboes doubling the voice at the octave throughout the A section.

Character description: Eustazio is the brother of Goffredo and a part of the Christian army. Throughout the opera Eustazio and Goffredo are always together. It is noteworthy in the 1731 reworking of the opera that Handel eliminated this role all together. His character most often serves to encourage and give hope to the impending trials that Goffredo and Rinaldo face. He also is the one who suggests they seek the advice of the Christian sorcerer in order to find and rescue Almirena.

Singer who originated the role: Referred to as “Valentini”, Italian castrato Valentino Urbani was the first castrato to perform regularly in London, beginning in 1706, singing in many of the early Italian operas and pasticcios. Before that he sang in major operatic cities in Italy and also in Berlin. Handel usually gave him secondo roles. Other Handel roles written for him include Silvio in *Il pastor fido*, (1712), Egeo in *Teseo* (1713) and most likely the title role in *Silla* (1713). Handel’s writing for Valentini shows a somewhat restricted compass (A3 – Eflat5) and not tending towards the virtuosic. Some described him as a fine actor and ‘more chaste in his singing than Nicolini’. Charles Burney, reported that ‘his voice was feeble, and his execution moderate’ and regarding his role in *Teseo*, he ‘seems to have been gifted with very limited powers’.²⁵

Arias

1. “Sulla ruota di fortuna v'è girando”

Act I, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: F major – 3/4

Range: C4 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, trust, virtue, pride

Approx. duration: 3:30

²⁵ Winton Dean, “Valentini,” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 510–511.

Dramatic situation: After Argante's herald requests a safe, neutral meeting with General Goffredo, Eustazio comments on the possible reason for the meeting and on its unknown outcome.

Translation: (A) Hope spins around on the wheel of fortune. (B) But if a heart is virtuous, constancy is at its root.²⁶

2. "Col valor, colla virtù or si vada"

Act I, Scene 8

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: F major – 2/4

Range: A3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: encouragement, hope, trust

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: After the shocking abduction of Almirena, Eustazio encourages and consoles Goffredo and Rinaldo, telling them that he knows of a Christian sorcerer who can read the stars that will be able to help them find her.

Translation: (A) With valor, with virtue now let us go on to triumph. (B) From shameful enslavement the noble offspring I want to rescue.²⁷

²⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 349–350.

²⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 361.

3. “Siam prossimi al porto”

Act II, Scene 1

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: E minor – 3/4

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: B3 – C5

Orchestration: “Tutti”, V1, Ob 1, BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, comfort, long suffering

Approx. duration: 4:45

Dramatic situation: Eustazio, Goffredo and Rinaldo are journeying to seek the advice of the Christian sorcerer and rescue Almirena. Eustazio continues offering words of hope and consolation to both a worried father and grieving lover.

Translation: (A) We are close to port, to take comfort for our suffering. (B) May their hearts be consoled, grief be banished from those who know how to hope.²⁸

4. Di Sion nell’ alta sede

Act III, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B flat major – 12/8

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

²⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 363.

Prevailing emotions: courage, optimism, pride

Approx. duration: 3:15

Dramatic situation: Goffredo orders Eustazio to escort Almirena back to the camp and to protect her. Eustazio departs to inform Goffredo and Rinaldo that the enemy is approaching their camp and that their troops are ready for battle.

Translation: (A) Today only virtue and valor shall be seen in the capital of Zion.

(B) For in the end the noble reward for an exalted soul and a noble heart is great contentment.²⁹

Mago Christiano

Musical demands: One aria in Act III

The role of Mago Christiano is small, appearing only in the first scene of Act III. The range of the role is just over an octave from B flat3 – C5. He has two utterances of recitative and one da capo aria accompanied only by continuo. The aria is made up of short to medium phrases of eighth note triplet coloratura and a melodic contour that incorporates stepwise motion, skips and leaps of up to an octave. A clear and well-focused sound is necessary as the tessitura lies, for the most part, in the lower and middle registers with phrases often passing through the lower passaggio.

Character description: The Christian Sorcerer serves to aid Goffredo and Eustazio in finding Rinaldo and Almirena. He informs them that both are prisoners in Armida's

²⁹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 403.

enchanted castle. Aware of the extreme danger of their quest, the sorcerer provides them with magic wands, which ‘no witchcraft can withstand’.

Singer who originated the role: Alto castrato Giuseppe Cassani was from Bologna, where he sang in the church of S. Pietronio. In 1708 he arrived in London and made his debut in a revival of Haym’s adaption of Bononcini’s *Camilla*. He was severely criticized and was forced to withdraw after only two performances. Returning two years later, he remained a member of the Queen’s Theatre company until the Spring of 1712. During this time he sang in operas by Mancini, Gasparini and Bononcini. Handel composed one role for him: the role of the Mago in *Rinaldo*. Its narrow range of B3 – C4 and modest coloratura suggest that his abilities were limited.³⁰

Aria

1. “Andate, o forti, fra straggi”

Act III, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B flat major – 4/4

Range: B flat3 – C5

Tessitura: B flat3 – B flat 4

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: encouragement, pride, assurance, hope

Approx. duration: 3:00

³⁰ Winton Dean, “Cassani, Giuseppe” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80.

Dramatic situation: Eustazio and Goffredo, on their quest to rescue Rinaldo and Almirena from Armida, reach the foot of the mountain on top of which sits Armida's enchanted castle. At the foot of the mountain they discover a sorcerer, who tells them of the danger they face in reaching Armida's abode, which is guarded by monsters. They first ignore his warning, but after a failed attempt they return to ask for his aid. The Christian sorcerer provides them with a magic wand to ward off the monsters. As they depart again he sends them off with a song of encouragement.

Translation: (A) Go on your way, oh strong ones, amid carnage and corpses, without fear, now up to the summit. (B) O how great is the virtue of eternal wisdom, that can make a mockery of the powers of hell.³¹

³¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 390–391.

Chapter 3

Giulio Cesare in Egitto

First Performance:

King's Theatre, Haymarket, London on February 20, 1723

Librettist:

Giacomo Francesco Bussani, revised by Nicola Haym

Standard Countertenor Roles:

Cesare (a) – Francesco Bernardi “Senesino”

Sesto³² (mz) – Margherita Durastanti

Tolomeo (a) - Gaetano Berenstadt

Nireno (a) - Giuseppe Bigonzi

Cesare

Musical and technical demands: Eight arias (four in Act I, two in Act II, two in Act III), one duet with Cleopatra (soprano), final coro (B section of coro is a duet with Cleopatra)

Cesare is perhaps the most multi-dimensional role that Handel wrote for Senesino. His arias display a spectrum of emotions and call for a wide range of technical and dramatic capabilities. The most important technical demand associated with this role is

³² Not traditionally cast as a countertenor, but possible for a countertenor possessing an extraordinary upper extension and thus is able to sing comfortably above the treble staff.

the sheer stamina needed to sing eight da capo arias while retaining a strong and clear sound in the middle and lower tessituras. Four of the arias are bravura in nature, requiring extreme flexibility and breath control, i.e. “Presti omai”, “Empio diro tu sei”, “Al lampo del armi” and “Quel torrente”. Each has long passages of sixteenth note coloratura and require the ability to quickly and incisively declaim text. A vibrant trill and a playful improvisatory-like style are necessary for “Se in fiorito” and a clean messa di voce and doleful lyricism are called upon in the Act III lament, “Aure deh per pieta”. The instrumental texture for Cesare’s arias leans towards the light side of the spectrum. The vocal line at times is doubled by upper strings but more often, just by continuo alone. While there is no historical evidence of Handel transposing any of Cesare’s arias for revivals, countertenors now often ask for the Act III aria, “Quel torrente” to be transposed up a step to D major since it occurs late in the opera and sounds more brilliant in a higher tessitura.

Character description: From the beginning of the opera, Cesare is characterized as possessing strength and heroism along with a sympathetic self-awareness of love and humanity. He is a triumphant champion of war but desires peace with those whom he defeats, going so far as to defend the oppressed Cornelia and Sesto. His awareness of the frailty of human greatness, as seen in his accompanied recitative, “Alma del gran Pompeo” also serves to deepen his character. One other human characteristic found in Cesare is carnal desire. This is apparent in his initial meeting with Lydia, Cleopatra in disguise. Not until the middle of Act II does this desire deepen into a genuine care for her well-being and their future together.

Singer who originated role: Famed alto castrato Francesco Bernardi was more popularly known as Senesino, a nickname derived from his birthplace, Siena. Between 1708 and 1719 Senesino sang in the major operatic centers throughout Italy as well as in Dresden. In September 1720, Senesino was engaged by Handel for the second season of the Royal Academy in London. He remained with the company until its collapse in 1728, singing in all 32 operas produced during this period, thirteen of which were by Handel. Four years later, Senesino was reengaged by Handel and Heidegger as primo uomo for newly formed Second Academy, in which he sang leading roles in four new operas by Handel as well as in many revivals. By the end of the 1734 season a congenial working relationship between Senesino and Handel had dissolved and Senesino defected, joining instead Handel's rival, Italian composer Nicola Porpora at the Opera of the Nobility. In all Senesino sang a total of twenty roles in Handel's operas, seventeen of which were created for him: Guido in *Flavio*, Andronico in *Tamerlano*, Bertarido in *Rodelinda*, Lucejo in *Scipione* and title roles in *Muzio Scevola*, *Floridante*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Ottone*, *Alessandro*, *Admeto*, *Riccardo Primo*, *Siroe*, *Tolomeo*, *Poro*, *Ezio*, *Sosarme* and *Orlando*. He also sang in revivals of *Radamisto*, *Rinaldo* and *Partenope*. His vocal range was not extensive. Handel wrote from G3 – E5, staying well within these limits. To compensate for this, Senesino called upon an immense range of technical resource and emotional projection. Senesino's fast arias showcased brilliant, vigorous coloratura, the slow arias exploited highly expressive messa di voce and an unrivalled utterance of recitative. The fullest description of Senesino's vocal abilities was given by J. J. Quantz and reported by Charles Burney. This account dates from 1719 when he was heard in Dresden, a year before joining Handel's company in London. Quantz says,

“Senesino had a powerful, clear, equal, and sweet contralto voice, with a perfect intonation and an excellent shake. His manner of singing was masterly and his elocution unrivalled. Though he never loaded adagios with too many ornaments, yet he delivered the original and essential notes with the utmost refinement. He sang allegros with great fire, and marked rapid divisions, from the chest, in an articulate and pleasing manner. His countenance was well adapted to the stage, and his action was natural and noble. To these qualities he joined a majestic figure; but his aspect and deportment were more suited to the part of a hero than a lover.”³³

Arias

1. “Presti omai”

Act I, Scene I

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: D major – 4/4

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: D4 - D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: pride, triumph, assurance, diplomacy

Approx. duration: 2:00

Dramatic situation: The opera begins with Cesare crossing over the Nile into Egypt, accompanied by his faithful tribune, Curio. Welcomed by the Egyptians, he sings a short, victory song, having just defeated Pompeo in battle.

³³ Winton Dean, “Senesino” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 447-449.

Translation: Now let the Egyptian land grant its palms of victory to the victor.³⁴

2. “Empio dirò tu sei”

Act I, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: C minor – 4/4

Range: C4 – E flat 5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: disbelief, outrage, sympathetic torment

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: Cesare agrees to a peaceful settlement with Pompeo at the bequest of Pompeo’s wife, Cornelia and her son Sesto. Achilla, the Egyptian general, enters with a message of welcome from emperor Tolomeo and presents to Cesare the gift of Pompeo’s severed head. Outraged, Cesare sends Achilla back to Tolomeo with a message of contempt and disgust.

Translation: (A) Wicked I shall say that you are, take yourself from my eyes, you are all cruelty. (B) It isn’t of a king the heart that gives itself to severity, which in its depths has no pity.³⁵

³⁴ Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 1 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 259.

³⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 264.

3. “Non è sì vago e bello il fior nel prato”

Act I, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: E major – 4/4

Range: B3 – C#5

Tessitura: B3 – C#5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: arousal, longing, enthrallment

Approx. duration: 3:15

Dramatic situation: Cleopatra appears before Cesare disguised as Lydia, a noble Egyptian maiden, whose fortune has been stolen by Tolomeo. In tears, Lydia appeals to Cesare requesting justice. Captivated by her beauty, Cesare promises her redress and sings a song, making her aware of the pleasurable impression she has had on him.

Translation: (A) The flower in the meadow is not as charming and lovely as your lovely face is charming and gentle. (B) The worth of a flower is given to it alone, but you, my beauty, are the personification of April itself in full bloom.³⁶

4. “Va tacito e nascosto”

Act I, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Andante, e piano

Key and Meter: F major – 4/4

Range: C4 – D5

³⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 277.

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Horn solo, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: self-assured, self aware, veiled politeness, sly

Approx. duration: 6:30

Dramatic situation: Tolomeo attempts to trap Cesare by offering him rest in his private chambers. Cesare, aware of his treacherous nature, recognizes that he must be watchful and cautious.

Translation: (A) The astute hunter proceeds quietly and stealthily when he is eager for prey. (B) And he who is disposed to do evil, does not wish that anyone see the deceit of his heart.³⁷

5. “Se in fiorito ameno prato”

Act II, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Violin solo, Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Vla, Bs 1, Bs 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: delight, joy, arousal, longing, pleasure

Approx. duration: 7:00

³⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 285.

Dramatic situation: Nireno assures Cesare that Lydia is waiting for him in her chambers. There she will introduce him to Cleopatra. Cesare, full of desire and anticipation sings a song of the teasing nature of love.

Translation: (A) If in a flowery, pleasant meadow the little bird among flowers hides itself, he makes his singing more pleasing. (B) If in the same way the graceful Lydia unfolds notes even more melodious [than that little bird's], she causes every heart to fall in love [with her].³⁸

6. “Al lampo dell’armi quest’alma guerriera”

Act II, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B flat major – 4/4

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: bravery, encouraging, pride, hope

Approx. duration: 3:15

Dramatic situation: Cesare is wooing Lydia in her chambers when they are interrupted by Curio, who warns that they have been betrayed and must flee immediately. Cleopatra reveals her true identity and bids Cesare to flee, but he refuses, and instead goes to face his assailants.

³⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 296.

Translation: (A) My warrior soul shall wreak vengeance at the flash of arms.

(B) Let the one who gives it strength not disarm my warrior-like right hand.³⁹

7. “Dall’ ondosso periglio (accomp) Aure, deh, per pieta”

Act III, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Andante, e piano

Key and Meter: F major – 3/8

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: powerlessness, amazement, anxiety, hope, despair, doubt

Approx. duration: 7:45 (including recitative)

Dramatic situation: Cesare, having escaped Tolomeo’s soldiers by swimming across the harbor, washes up on shore. Amazed that the fates have kept him alive, he sings a lament to the breezes, asking them to comfort him from the loss of his beloved.

Translation: (Accompanied Recitative) From the waves danger safe I am brought to shore by my propitious fate. Heavenly fate hasn’t quite yet allowed me to die. But where shall I go? And who shall give me aid? Where are my troops? Where are my legions which opened the way for so many of my victories? Is it necessary for the monarch of the world to wander alone over these solitary sands?

(A) Breezes, ah, for pity’s sake, breathe on my breast to bring comfort, oh God, to my grief. (B) Tell me, where is, (Cleopatra) what is she doing? The idol of my breast, the

³⁹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 310.

beloved and sweet treasure of this heart? But all around I see strewn with weapons and dead bodies these unlucky sands, it must be after all a sign of dire news.⁴⁰

8. “Quel torrente, che cade dal monte”

Act III, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: C major – 3/8

Range: A3 – E5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: exhilaration, pride, courage, zeal

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Arriving on the same shore as Cesare, Sesto and Nireno come across Achilla, who has been mortally wounded. Achilla repents of having conspired with Tolomeo, and gives Sesto a seal that gives command of his troops. Cesare, who has witnessed the scene, takes the seal and hurries off to assemble his forces.

Translation: (A) The torrent that falls from the mountain sweeps all that stands in its way. (B) So do I to whomever stands in my way.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 322–324.

⁴¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 328.

Sesto

Musical and technical demands: Five arias (two in Act I, two in Act II, two in Act III), a duet with Cornelia (contralto), final coro

The overall range of the role sits between B4 – G5 with the tessitura lying between C4 – G5. The most prevailing technical demands of this role are the continuous transitioning between the lower, medium and upper registers, frequent wide leaps encompassing up to an octave and a high lying tessitura that requires use of both soft and loud dynamics. Three of his five arias have coloratura passages that vary from short to long, consisting of combinations of eighth and sixteenth note movement and frequent syncopation.

Character description: Sesto is the son of Cornelia and Pompeo. After witnessing the death of his father in the opening scene his character becomes largely one dimensional and introspective. Solely focused on returning vengeance on those who killed his father, he experiences only brief moments of consoling his grieving and suicidal mother. The duet at the end of Act I, “Son nata lagrimar” shows a glimpse of his love and care for his mother and a realization that he must step into his father’s shoes. Throughout the course of the opera Sesto shows himself a sympathetic character as he steadily grows in courage and confidence.

Singer who originated the role: Margherita Durastanti (fl. 1700-34) had a long personal association with Handel and his operas. He began composing for her during his early years in Italy. In addition to Sesto, the other roles Handel wrote for her are Mary

Magdalene in *La Resurrezione* (1708), title roles in *Agrippina* (1709) and *Radamisto* (1720), Gismonda in *Ottone* (1723), Vitige in *Flavio* (1723) and, more than ten years later, Tauride in *Arianna in Creta* (1734). These roles show an exceptionally wide range of character, suggesting she was a gifted actress. Although a soprano, her voice was more akin to what one might today call a high lyric mezzo-soprano. It's compass gradually dropped from D3 – A5 in *Agrippina* to B3 – G5 as Tauride in *Arianna in Creta*. Charles Burney notes that her 'person was coarse and masculine', no doubt a reason she often sang male roles.⁴²

Arias

1. “Svegliatevi nel core”

Act I, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Allegro⁴³

Key and Meter: C minor – 4/4

Range: C4 – G5

Tessitura: C4 – F5

Orchestration: Fl 1, Fl 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: courage, vengeance, anger, insecurity

Approx. duration: 4:00

⁴² Winton Dean, “Durastanti, Margherita,” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 137.

⁴³ found in autograph (B section is largo)

Dramatic situation: Having just witnessed his father beheaded at the request of Tolomeo, Sesto swears to have revenge. In the B section he sees a vision of his father calling him to avenge his death with severity.

Translation: (A) Rouse yourselves in my heart, furies of a spirit offended, to wreak on a traitor, bitter vengeance. (B) The shade of my father hastens to my defense, and says, “from you son, severity is expected.”⁴⁴

2. “Cara speme”

Act I, Scene 8

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: E flat major – 4/4

Range: D4 – G5

Tessitura: D4 – G5

Orchestration: Vln 1, BC

Prevailing emotions: hope, calmness, resoluteness, gratitude

Approx. duration: 5:00

Dramatic situation: Alone, Sesto works up courage to plan his revenge and hopes that fate will grant him the opportunity.

Translation: (A) Dear hope, this heart you begin to flatter. (B) It seems that heaven may grant its favor to avenge my wrongs.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 268.

⁴⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 282.

3. “L’angue offeso mai riposa”

Act II, Scene 6

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: C minor – 3/4

Range: C4 – G5

Tessitura: E flat 4 – G5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: revenge, unrest, rage, agitation

Approx. duration: 5:15

Dramatic situation: After again having to prevent his mother from killing herself, Sesto is urged by Nireno to secretly follow his mother in order to gain access to Tolomeo.

Continuing to work up his courage, he compares his restless state to that of an angered snake.

Translation: (A) The serpent offended never rests, if its poison first it does not pour within the blood of its offender. (B) Thus my soul does not dare to show itself haughty and great, if it doesn’t tear out that wicked heart.⁴⁶

4. “L’aure che spira”

Act II, Scene 11

Tempo marking: Allegro, e staccato

Key and Meter: E minor – 3/4

Range: B3 – G5

⁴⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 304.

Tessitura: D#4 – G5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: vengeance, courage, fury, wrath

Approx. duration: 5:15

Dramatic situation: After Nireno reveals a secret passage to Tolomeo's camp, Cornelia bids Sesto to go and show his strength and courage by killing the wicked tyrant. Sesto responds with an aria of vengeance.

Translation: (A) The air that wafts around a tyrant and proud man, he does not deserve to breathe. (B) It awakens me to anger, that stern heart; his death alone can placate me.⁴⁷

5. “La giustizia he già sull’arco”

Act III, Scene 6

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G minor – 4/4

Range: D4 – G5

Tessitura: D4 – G5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: vengefulness, ferocity, zeal, excitement

Approx. duration: 4:15

Dramatic situation: Having discovered that Cesare is still alive and Achilla dead, Sesto's hope is revived again and he sings one last aria of vengeance.

⁴⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 317–318.

Translation: (A) Justice has already on its bow a ready arrow for vengeance to punish a traitor. (B) However late the arrow is, even more cruel the punishment awaiting a wicked heart.⁴⁸

Tolomeo

Musical demands: Three arias (one in each act) and a cavatina in Act II

All three of Tolomeo's arias express disdain and vengeance in some form or another. The singer should have the capability of producing a menacing color throughout the range to enhance his evil character. Technical demands for this role include rapid declamation of text while singing leaps that pass through lower, middle and upper registers and a variety of coloratura. In his first aria, "L'empio sleale" coloratura passages are of medium length and incorporate a mixture of quick sixteenth- and eighth-note sequences set to a disjunct melodic contour. In his second aria, "Si spietata", melismas are all in eighth-note triplets. Coloratura passages are moderately long incorporating stepwise motion and intervals of a third. Throughout the A section the voice is doubled at the octave by the violins, but in the B section the violins drop out and only continuo remains. The cavatina in Act II, "Bella dee" is quite different from his other three arias. Accompanied solely by continuo, it requires legato phrasing and a sweeter sound compared to his earlier arias. The one ascending coloratura phrase in this passage need not be executed in one breath, but should be sung in a manner sounding as if it is being improvised. His final aria, "Domerò la tua fierezza", like "L'empio sleale", is characterized by syllabic text setting and angular phrases which move back and forth

⁴⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 329.

between the lower and upper registers. The aria has two ascending melismas that are made up of a galloping figure (an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes), with the accompaniment either doubling the vocal line at the octave or playing in dialogue with it.

Character description: Tolomeo is co-ruler of Egypt together with his older sister, Cleopatra. He is characterized as a one-dimensional tyrant, set on defeating and killing Cesare as well as having the beautiful widow, Cornelia as his consort. In current productions it is common to see Tolomeo portrayed as a heartless, decadent and short-tempered, teenage brat who constantly feels threatened by the strength of the other characters.

Singer who originated the role: Italian alto castrato Gaetano Berenstadt (c.1690 – 1735) made his debut in Florence in 1712. He sang in serenatas, court concerts and operas in Düsseldorf and Kassel before coming to London in 1717. There he worked with Handel for the first time, singing the role of Argante in a revival of *Rinaldo*. For this production Handel wrote three new arias tailored to suit his vocal abilities. He then returned to the Continent to sing in Dresden and throughout Italy until 1722, at which point he returned to London to sing Timante in a revival of Handel's *Floridante*. It was then that he joined the Royal Academy of Music for the next two seasons as secondo uomo, performing in new works by the three composers of the academy: Handel, Ariosti and Bononcini. Handel composed a number of roles for him, including Adalberto in *Ottone, re di Germania* and the title role in *Flavio*. It is recorded by Charles Burney that Berenstadt had a 'huge unwieldy figure' and for this reason was never cast in the role of a young

lover but mostly played tyrants or unsympathetic, old men. His arias tend towards the blustery type, filled with jagged leaps and moderate length coloratura. His range was said to have encompassed from G3 – E5.⁴⁹

Arias

1. “L’empio, sleale, indegno”

Act I, Scene 6

Tempo marking: Allegro e staccato

Key and Meter: E flat major – 3/8

Range: B flat 3 – E flat 5

Tessitura: B flat 3 – E flat 5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: indignation, vengeance, jealousy

Approx. duration: 3:30

Dramatic situation: Achilla reports back to Tolomeo about Cesare’s angry reaction to the gift of Pompey’s head. This in turn enrages Tolomeo who then plots to kill Cesare and thus strengthen his claim to the throne.

Translation: (A) That wicked, disloyal, unworthy man, would wish to steal my kingdom, and this way disturb my peace. (B) But let him indeed lose his life before my faith be betrayed by his greedy heart.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Lowell Lindgren, “Berenstadt, Gaetano,” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37–38.

⁵⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 274.

2. “Sì spietata, il tuo rigore”

Act II, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Allegro, e staccato

Key and Meter: C major – 4/4

Range: B3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: anger, taunting, lust, mocking

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: Tolomeo’s coarse advances toward Cornelia are rebuffed. Now angry, Tolomeo responds to her by saying he is not opposed to using force to get what he wants.

Translation: (A) Yes, pitiless one, your severity awakens hatred in my breast. (B) Since you despise m heart, taste, unfaithful woman, my poison.⁵¹

3. “Belle dee di questo core”

Act II, Scene 9

Tempo marking: none given

Key and Meter: D major – 4/4

Range: C#4 – D5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, BC

⁵¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 300.

Form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: lust, longing, eagerness, arousal

Approx. duration: 2:30

Dramatic situation: A room in Tolomeo's harem, he is surrounded by his favorite concubines including Cornelia. He sings a song praising their beauty.

Translation: Lovely goddesses of my heart you bear heaven in your faces.⁵²

4. "Domerò la tua fierezza"

Act III, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Allegro, e staccato

Key and Meter: E minor – 4/4

Range: B3 – C#5

Tessitura: B3 – C#5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: hostility, vengefulness, mocking, satisfaction

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Cleopatra, now Tolomeo's prisoner, is chastised, and after being put in chains, is forced to kneel in reverence at his feet.

Translation: (A) I shall tame your pride, which my throne abhors and despises, and humbled I shall see you. (B) You, like Icarus, rebellious surmount, you wish the stars, but those wings I shall clip.⁵³

⁵² Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 312.

⁵³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 321.

Nireno

Musical demands: No arias; only secco recitative and final coro

He is in all three acts and in a total of eight scenes. In some productions the choice is made to give Nireno an aria. In this case, if cast as an alto countertenor, the aria, “Chi perde un momento” from the 1725 revival, is transposed down from E flat major to either B flat or C major. When inserted, the aria falls in Act II Scene 4.⁵⁴ The range of the role is C4 – D5 with a tessitura of D4 – C5.

Character description: Nireno is Cleopatra’s faithful and trusted servant who aids in her scheming and later becomes an ally to Sesto, Cornelia and Cesare.

Singer who originated the role: Italian alto castrato Giuseppe Bigonzi (fl. 1707 – 1733) sang intermittently in Venice, appearing in operas of Albinoni, the brothers, Michelangelo and Francesco Gasparini, in Florence for Predieri and in Rome for Caldara. He was engaged for the London season of 1723 – 24 to sing small roles. He made his debut in Ariosti’s *Vespasiano* and also sang in Bononcini’s *Califurnia*. Nireno in *Giulio Cesare* was the only role he sang for Handel.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Dean, *Handel Operas 1704-1726*, 503

⁵⁵ Winton Dean, “Bigonzi, Giuseppe” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44.

Chapter 4

Rodelinda

First Performance:

King's Theatre, Haymarket, London on February 13, 1725

Librettist:

Antonio Salvi, revised by Nicola Haym

Countertenor Roles:

Bertarido (a) – Francesco Bernardi “Senesino”

Unulfo (a) – Andrea Pacini

Bertarido

Musical and technical demands: Seven arias (two in Act I, two in Act II and three in Act III), one arioso, one slow duet with Rodelinda (soprano), three accompanied recitatives and final coro.

Bertarido is the highest of the Handel roles written for Senesino, reaching up to E5. Most of the other roles Handel wrote for him do not exceed D5. Like Cesare, this role requires excellent stamina since two of its most challenging bravura arias come in Act III. Important technical demands for this role include excellent vocal flexibility for the many long fiery passages of sixteenth note coloratura, enormous breath control, an ability to sing with a wide dynamic range, a dramatic ability to declaim text for accompanied recitatives and an overall evenness and clarity of the low, middle and upper

registers. Each of the allegro bravura arias has a different challenge. In “Scacciata dal suo nido sen vola” the medium length coloratura passages incorporate both short scalar movement as well as ascending thirds, quick leaps of up to an octave and an abundance of both long and short trills scattered throughout the divisions. The challenges of “Se fiero belva” involve clearly executing the long and leaping passages of sixteenth note coloratura and keeping a strong and clear sound in the lower register especially at the ends of phrases, which tend to lie below the treble staff. Handel saves the most difficult bravura aria for last. “Vivi tiranno” is a long aria requiring well-paced stamina. Crisp articulation of text is necessary for the short opening motive and the short melodic fragments that follow. Employing a chest mix for the low B flats in the opening motive proves effective in establishing the heroic and righteous rage needed in this aria. Other technical demands include trilling on held notes within melismas and executing messa di voce. The coloratura passages vary from short to long and mostly incorporate patterns of descending scalar sixteenth notes with octave leaps interspersed throughout.

Character description: Bertarido is the deposed King of Milan, husband to Rodelinda and father to their son Flavio. At the beginning of the opera he is presumed dead by all. He begins the opera as a weak, defeated hero, returning to his country in disguise to avoid recognition, only to find his own tomb and discover that he has been pronounced dead by his successor, Grimoaldo. Handel’s writing for Bertarido appropriately lacks the triumphant heroism of a reigning king, instead portraying quiet and sympathetic nobility that takes a while to build courage and assurance. It is not until the end of Act II that we see Bertarido shift from thoughts of bitterness and uncertainty to those of a chivalrous

lover. By the end of the opera he establishes himself as a true hero, having confessed his own identity to his enemy and going as far as saving his enemy's life.

Singer who originated role: Francesco Bernardi "Senesino" (See Giulio Cesare, Chapter 3)

Arias

1. "Dove sei, amato bene"

Act I, Scene 6

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: E major – 3/8

Range: B3 – E5

Tessitura: D4 – C#5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: sorrow, torment, insecurity, hope, frustration

Approx. duration: 7:00 (including accompanied recit)

Dramatic situation: Bertarido's first appearance in the opera. He has returned to Milan in disguise to search for his beloved wife, Rodelinda. This solo scene is set in a cypress wood, where the kings of Lombardy are buried. In the accompanied recitative Bertarido contemplates his own tomb, recently erected by his usurper, Grimoaldo. His feelings change from indignation to disbelief and end in grief-stricken wonder, desiring the return of his beloved. The aria is directed to Rodelinda. He questions her whereabouts, and pleads for her return.

Translation: (A) Where are you, dear beloved? Come my soul to console.

(B) I am weighed down by my torment, and my cruel lamenting can only be lightened at your side.⁵⁶

2. “Confusa si miri l’infida consorte “

Act I, Scene 11

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B minor - 3/8

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: B3 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: dismay, contempt, spite, torment

Approx. duration: 5:00

Dramatic situation: Alone, Bertarido is indignant and confounded at Rodelinda’s acceptance of Grimoaldo’s marriage demand. He believes her feelings for him to be inconstant. Accusing her of feigned sighs and grief, he wishes her to be as disturbed as he is.

Translation: (A) Confounded may she see herself, my faithless consort, who in the face of death thus mocks me. (B) With feigned sighs (she) both trembles and grieves, mourning my death but in fact killing me while I am still alive.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 1 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 13–14.

⁵⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 25.

3. “Con rauco mormorio piangano”

Act II, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: E flat major - 12/8

Range: B flat3 – D5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Recorder 1, Recorder 2, Fl, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, Bs 1, Bs 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: rejection, pity, isolation, anguish

Approx. duration: 6:00

Dramatic situation: Alone in a “delicious location” Bertarido asks the brooks and fountains to weep with him, and the hills and caves to echo his laments. At the end of the B section, Bertarido’s sister, Eduige is heard from a distance. She believes she hears the voice of her dead brother.

Translation: (A) With a husky murmur weep at my tears brooklets and fountains,

(B) And in halting and sad accents, the caves and hills echo my laments.⁵⁸

4. “Scacciata dal suo nido sen vola”

Act II, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: C minor - 4/4

Range: B flat3 – E flat5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

⁵⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 36.

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: resolve, courage, hope, thankfulness, excitement

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Unulfo reveals to Bertarido that Rodelinda has remained constant and advises him to reveal himself to her. Bertarido asks heaven to pour out scorn upon his oppressor and thanks heaven for restoring Rodelinda to him.

Translation: (A) The swallow, when driven from her nest flies uncomplainingly to other parts. (B) Of its fate it doesn't complain as long as he has it's mate with him, who is always faithful and beautiful.⁵⁹

5. "Chi di voi fù più infedele "

Act III, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: B flat minor - 3/4

Range: C flat 4 – D flat 5

Tessitura: C 4 – D flat 5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Aria form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: dismay, grief, frustration, self-pity

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: Alone in a dark dungeon Bertarido laments the cruelty of love and his fate.

⁵⁹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 41.

Translation: (A) Which of you was more unfaithful, blind love (or) cruel fate, which of you deceived me more? (B) I was driven by pitiless fate, first from my throne, and then to chains cruel love led me.⁶⁰

6. “Se fiera belva ha cinto frà le catene”

Act III, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: C major – 4/4

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: B3 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: fury, courage, exhilaration, revulsion

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation and expression: Bertarido, no longer afraid of Grimoaldo, bolsters himself, proclaiming that his fate depends upon his own strength.

Translation: (A) If a proud beast finds itself caught by the foot in a trap, it tries to shake itself free. (B) But then, (once) from the trap it is freed, everyone flees, for its injury has soon taught it not to show mercy.⁶¹

General comments: This aria is not found in autograph. It could have been lifted from another work. It is often excluded from productions.

⁶⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 54.

⁶¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 62–63.

7. “Vivi tiranno”

Act III, Scene 8

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B flat major – 3/4

Range: B flat3 – D5

Tessitura: C4 –C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: outrage, disgust, zeal, pride, taunting

Approx. duration: 5:30

Dramatic situation: Bertarido has just saved Grimoaldo from being murdered by his own henchman, Garibaldo. With righteous indignation, Bertarido throws down his sword before Grimoaldo and rebukes the tyrant for the treacherous actions he committed against Rodelinda and against one who would go so far as to save his life.

Translation: (A) Live tyrant! I have saved you! Kill me in your ingratitude, unleash your rage! (B) I saved you only to show you that destiny has given me the more noble heart.

General comments: Composed for the first revival of the work in December of 1725, this aria is almost always included in productions today, in substitution of “Se fiera belva”.

Unulfo

Musical and technical demands: Three arias (one aria in each Act), final coro

The range required for Unulfo is similar to that of Bertarido, A3 – E5 but the tessitura lies a bit lower and the E5 is just touched. All three of Unulfo's arias are in major keys. The first, "Sono i colpi della sorte" is a virtuosic show piece incorporating short, medium and long passages of coloratura each quite different and challenging in contour. The most challenging passages include a mixture of stepwise motion and a wide range of skips, passing back and forth between the lower and upper registers. The last coloratura passage is also very challenging. It is made up of a long sequence of wide leaps and rapid repeated notes in the lower passagio. It is notable that when Handel revived *Rodelinda* the following year, Andrea Pacini was no longer a part of Handel's company and the role of Unulfo was taken by the alto castrato Antonio Salvi, who did not possess Pacini's extreme virtuosity. For this reason, Handel rewrote Unulfo's first aria, and it interestingly enough, it has a totally different mood from the first version. In some ways it more appropriately reflects the sympathetic and encouraging aspects of Unulfo's character. Unulfo's second and third arias have a higher tessitura than the first, and both are in triple time, with more lyrical coloratura. Handel keeps the accompanying texture thin throughout these two arias with the lowest passages accompanied only by continuo.

Character description and musical demands: Unulfo is a secondo uomo role. He is a counselor to the usurper Grimoaldo but also a secret and loyal ally to Bertarido.

Throughout the opera Unulfo's emotional state is always linked to Bertarido's situation.

He is a sympathetic friend, eager to help and lend an encouraging word.

Singer for whom the role was originally conceived: Italian alto castrato Andrea Pacini, also known as “Il Lucchesino” was born in 1690 in Lucca. Between 1708 and 1729 he appeared throughout Italy in operas by Alessandro Scarlatti, Albinoni, Vivaldi, Porpora, Hasse and Vinci. For the 1724 – 25 season Pacini was engaged by the Royal Academy in London. In October of 1724 he made his debut to critical acclaim in the title role of Handel’s *Tamerlano*. The same season he premiered Unulfo in *Rodelinda* and sang Tolomeo in a revival of *Giulio Cesare* for which Handel wrote him a new aria. His vocal range was A3 – E5.⁶²

Arias

1. “Sono i colpi della sorte “

Act I, Scene 10

Tempo marking: None given

Key and Meter: D major - 4/4

Range: A3 – E5

Tessitura: B3 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: empathy, concern, hope

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Unulfo and Bertarido both watch in secret as Rodelinda gives into Grimoaldo’s demand of marriage. Unulfo, unable to comfort to his friend, asks to be dismissed so he can be alone to think about how he may help the sad situation.

⁶² Winton Dean, “Pacini, Andrea” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 362.

Translation: (A) The blows of fate for an unvanquished and strong heart may be bitter but not mortal. (B) But if love intervenes, the more noble the heart, the more fatal the hurt.⁶³

2. “Fra tempeste funeste quest’ alma”

Act II, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 3/8

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: joy, hope, relief

Approx. duration: 5:00

Dramatic situation: Alone, Unulfo is comforted with the thought of bringing some relief to Bertarido by being able to report Rodelinda’s proven constancy and faithfulness.

Translation: (A) Amid dire tempests a star appears as a harbinger of peace [to soothe] his [Bertarido’s] soul. (B) And removes every shadow of grief; the faith of his beloved shines (ever) more beautifully.⁶⁴

Comments: Although the tempo marking is Allegro, the slurring violin figures paint more of a gentle storm. The general affect of this aria is one of rising hope amidst a challenging situation. If taken too fast the result will be an unsettling effect.

⁶³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 24–25.

⁶⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 36.

3. “Un zeffiro spirò”

Act III, Scene 1

Tempo marking: None given

Key and Meter: F major – 3/4

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: D4 – C5

Orchestration: Recorder 1, Recorder 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, Bs, BC

Prevailing emotions: joy, relief, serenity

Approx. duration: 5:30

Dramatic situation: Eduige gives Unulfo a key that will open a secret passageway leading from Bertarido’s prison cell to an outside garden. Unulfo rejoices in the turn of events and being able to assist in rescuing his friend.

Translation: (A) A breeze wafted, which lightened my soul and calm brought to it.

(B) If I save my master, nothing further shall my heart desire, and peace of mind then I shall have.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 1, 51.

Chapter 5

Orlando

First Performance:

King's Theatre, London, January 27th, 1733

Librettist:

Carlo Sigismondo Capece, based on Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*

Standard Countertenor Roles:

Orlando (a) – Francesco Bernardi “Senesino”

Medoro (a) – Francesca Bertolli

Orlando

Musical and technical demands: Five arias (two in Act I, two in Act II, one in Act III), three cavatinas (one in Act I, two in Act III), 1 arioso, two short duets, five accompanied recitatives, final coro

The amount of music for Orlando is considerable and quite varied in comparison to the earlier Senesino roles of Bertarido or Cesare. Five accompanied recitatives for one character is highly unusual. Of his eight arias, only four are in the standard da capo or dal segno form. Three are cavatinas and the Act II finale is a fully developed mad scene made up of accompanied recitative interspersed with various aria forms. The range of the role is B flat 3 – D5 and it has a tessitura that lies mostly from B4 – C5. The technical demands commonly associated with roles composed for Senesino are strength, clarity of

tone in lower range and ease in transitioning between the lower and middle registers, long passages of sixteenth note and triplet coloratura, an excellent trill, and a keen dramatic sense in the declaiming accompanied recitative. The accompanying instrumental texture is thick at times especially in the first aria, “Non fù già men forte Alcide”. Lyrical sections of the role are found in the cavatinas “Stimolato della gloria” and “Gia l’ebro mio ciglio”. The most demanding of the bravura arias is “Cielo, sei tu consenti” which contains four coloratura passages of eighth-note triplets. Two of these are very long and all of them incorporate ascending and descending stepwise motion as well as multiple skips of up to a sixth.

Character description: Orlando is a renowned warrior who desires to take a break from the duty of war to experience love. Capece’s libretto brings out many sympathetic human qualities not often attributed to Orlando. At the beginning of the opera we see Orlando in doubt and full of angst. His first entrance aria, a gentle cavatina accompanied only by continuo, contains nothing to suggest a hero. We then begin to see a prideful self-confidence emerge as Orlando boldly asserts that he can experience love while also continuing with his duties of battle. From here begins a steady, downward spiral to the depths of misery, where he is driven mad and loses all self control. It is only through the interference of the magician, Zoroastro that Orlando is saved from himself.

Singer who originated the role: Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” (See Giulio Cesare, Chapter 3)

Arias

1. “Stimolato dalla Gloria”

Act I, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: E major – 4/4

Range: B3 – C#5

Tessitura: B3 – B4

Orchestration: BC

Form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: doubt, anxiety, vacillation

Approx. duration: 1:45

Dramatic situation: Orlando is torn between desiring love and his duties in war.

Translation: (A) Inspired by glory, consumed by love, what will you do, wretched heart of mine.⁶⁶

2. “Non fù già men forte Alcide”

Act I, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: F major – 6/8

Range: B flat3 – C5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Horn I, Horn II, Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

⁶⁶ Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 2 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 149.

Prevailing emotions: pride, optimism, zeal

Approx. duration: 5:30

Dramatic situation: After Zoroastro, magician and guardian of Orlando's glory, urges him to give up following Cupid and resume following Mars, Orlando waives but then decides to win glory in the service of love.

Translation: (A) Hercules was not deemed less strong, though he often lay down his weapons when at his lovely Omphale's bosom. (B) Nor less fierce was the great Achilles, though arrayed in a damsel's dress, when he threatened Asia's kingdoms.⁶⁷

3. "Fammi combattere"

Act I, Scene 10

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: B flat major – 4/4

Range: B flat3 – D5

Tessitura: B flat3 – C5

Orchestration: Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: exhilaration, pride, infatuation

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: Angelica, afraid that Orlando will prevent her departure with her beloved Medoro, pretends to be jealous of Isabella, the princess Orlando has just rescued. Angelica asks Orlando to show his sincerity by banishing the princess, Isabella. Orlando agrees and declares himself ready to prove his constancy.

⁶⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 152–153.

Translation: (A) Bid me combat monsters and gorgons, if you wish to have proof of my valor. (B) Massive walls bring down, undo magic charms, if you wish that I should boast of giving you proofs of love.⁶⁸

4. “Cielo! Se tu consenti”

Act II, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: E minor – 4/4

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: B4 – C5

Orchestration: Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: torment, anger, frustration, jealousy

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: While in the woods with the shepherdess, Dorinda, Orlando discovers that both Angelica and Dorinda are in love with the prince, Medoro. Dorinda shows Orlando a bracelet, saying it was given to her by Medoro but Orlando recognizes it as his own gift to Angelica. Immediately he becomes jealous and, in a fit of rage, vows to pursue Angelica to the banks of Acheron. He also prays that his own sword may end his life.

Translation: (A) Oh Heaven, let me plunge my own sword into my breast. (B) So that this cruel pain within my breast may find an escape through the gash, which I inflict upon my breast with my own sword.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 164.

5. “Ah! Stigi e larve... Vaghe pupille”

Act II Finale

Tempo marking: A tempo di Gavotta

Key and Meter: F major

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: B4 – C5

Orchestration: Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: jealousy, rage, terror, self-pity

Form of aria: Mad scene (accomp recit – aria – accomp recit – aria)

Approx. duration: 8:00

Dramatic situation: Orlando is pursuing Angelica but is prevented from catching her by the magic of Zoroastro, who has hidden her in a cloud. Rage and jealousy now consume Orlando’s mind, driving him mad. Hallucinating, he believes that Angelica has been transported to the underworld and begins imagining a whole new dramatic scenario. Orlando thinks he sees multiple images including Charon’s boat, Pluto surrounded by smoke and flames, Cerberus barking and Medoro in the arms of Proserpina’s. Angry, he goes to snatch Medoro but is abated by the weeping of Proserpina. His emotions then shift again, telling Proserpina to weep on, for his heart is hard as adamant and will not be softened. The act ends with Orlando running into a grotto, where he finds Zoroastro seated in a chariot. Zoroastro clasps Orlando into his arms, and flies off through the air.

⁶⁹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 171.

Translation: (A) Lovely eyes, no, do not weep, no, for even in this realm of tears they may in someone awaken pity. (B) But yes, eyes, yes, weep indeed, yes for deaf to your seductiveness I have a heart as hard as a diamond, and my fury cannot be calmed.⁷⁰

6. “Già lo stringo”

Act III, Scene 3

Tempo marking: A tempo di Gavotta

Key and Meter: B flat major – 4/4

Range: G3 – C5

Tessitura: G3 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlns and Vlas (colla parte), BC

Prevailing emotions: rage, vengefulness, panic, shock, sorrow, torment

Approx. duration: 2:30

Dramatic situation: Still raving mad, Orlando appears at Dorinda’s cottage and upon seeing her, believes she is the goddess Venus. He declares his love for her which utterly confuses Dorinda. As he presses her to answer his idea of who she is changes from a Venus to Angelica’s murdered brother, Argalia, whose death he must avenge. In the aria Orlando prepares for battle with his imagined rival, Ferrauto, and the god Mars, who he believes to be protecting his enemy. In the contrasting B section Orlando sees himself dead, slain by his own guilt. As the A section returns so does his emotional state of readiness.

⁷⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 180–181.

Translation: (A) With the strength of my arm I clasp and embrace a new Anthaeus and lift him off the earth. And if vanquished he doesn't surrender, because Mars is defending him, Mars as well I shall challenge to war. (B) I am dead, oh dear beloved one, pierced by cruel pangs, in a faint I fall to the earth.⁷¹

7. “Già l'ebro mio ciglio”

Act III, Scene 8

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: E flat major – 4/4

Range: B flat 3 – B flat 4

Tessitura: B flat 3 – B flat 4

Orchestration: Vla 1, Vla 2, BC

Form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: isolation, torment, frustration, relief

Approx. duration: 4:20

Dramatic situation: Orlando has tracked down Angelica and threatens to kill her. She bids him to do so believing he has already killed Medoro. Orlando takes her by force and throws her into a grotto, which immediately changes into a beautiful temple of Mars. Believing that he has purged the world of every awful monster, he begins to feel drowsy. As he begins to fall asleep he sings a cavatina asking wicked Cupid to not disturb him.

⁷¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 187.

Translation: (A) Now my drowsy eyes, [after drinking of] that sweet water [from the river of forgetfulness], invite me to rest. (B) You, wicked Cupid, as you fly about or frolic or tease, don't wake me up.⁷²

8. "Per far, mia diletta"

Act III, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Ardito

Key and Meter: C# minor – 2/2

Range: C#4 – C#5

Tessitura: C#4 – C#5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Form: cavatina

Prevailing emotions: guilt, shame, anguish, depression

Approx. duration: 1:00

Dramatic situation: Zoroastro sprinkles healing liquid over Orlando's eyes restoring him to his senses. After departing, Orlando awakens and is told by Dorinda that he has killed both Angelica and Medoro. Full of shame and despair he sings of his decision to kill himself.

Translation: A. To wreak, my beloved, for you vengeance, Orlando must die.⁷³

⁷² Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 196.

⁷³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 199.

Medoro

Musical and technical demands: 3 arias (one in each act), trio with Angelica (soprano) and Dorinda (soprano), final coro

This role is essentially lyrical in nature with a range between C3 – F5 and a tessitura that lies almost entirely on the treble staff. Both arias in Act I and Act II are marked *larghetto* and the third is *andante*, thus none requiring agile flexibility. The demands of the role involve a limpid vocal lyricism with clear and even timbre throughout the entire range. Both “Verdi allori” and “Vorrei poterti amar” constantly move between the lower, middle and upper registers and the latter aria has repeated descending phrases beginning as high as F5, on an unaccented syllable. In the trio that ends Act I, “Consolati o bella”, Medoro sings almost exclusively in duet with Angelica. For this reason both of these roles should have timbres that blend well. The tessitura for the trio lies from D3 – D4. This role has many similarities to Arsamene in *Serse*, as both require a higher, lyric alto countertenor.

Character description: An African prince, Medoro, is the shy, polite and non-confrontational heartthrob of the story, standing in stark contrast to the rough-edged anti-hero, Orlando. In the first act Medoro finds himself at the center of a love triangle with Angelica, Queen of Cathay, and the shepherdess, Dorinda. He meets Angelica in Dorinda’s hut while receiving convalescence. Medoro falls in love with Angelica but feels unworthy of her love until she assures him that he has gained her heart. In trying to avoid hurting Dorinda’s feelings, Medoro tells the shepherdess that Angelica is only a relative but Dorinda, in her heart, knows the truth. At the end of the first act the truth is

revealed to Dorinda by Angelica. Medoro remains a character of limited action throughout the rest of the opera and is absent for much of Act III. His arias tend towards emotions of nostalgia, politeness and romantic declarations of love. By the middle of the second act the importance of Medoro is more of the perceived threat that he represents to Orlando rather than any further development of his own personal character.

Singer who originated role: Italian contralto/mezzo soprano, Francesca Bertolli was hired by Handel during two separate periods of his operatic career in London; first for the second Royal Academy at the King's Theatre (1729 – 33) and then again between 1736 – 1737. Like Senesino, she defected to the Opera of the Nobility in 1733, but returned to Handel three years later. During the two separate periods she appeared in at least fifteen of Handel's operas and originated nine roles, five of which were male characters, i.e. Idelberto (*Lotario*), Armino (*Partenope*), Gandarte (*Poro*), Honoria (*Ezio*), Melo (*Sosarme*), Medoro (*Orlando*), Ramisa (*Arminio*), Leocasta (*Giustino*) and Selene (*Berenice*).⁷⁴ The roles composed for her indicate a voice of somewhat limited capacity encompassing a range of B3 – F5 and with little or no flair for virtuosity. She was described by Mrs. Pendarves, a close friend to Handel and commentator on the operatic scene, as 'a perfect beauty, quite a Cleopatra' although her voice, ear and manner by the same account were not held in such high esteem.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Bertolli also took part in Handel's first London oratorio performances, singing in *Esther*, *Deborah* and the bilingual *Acis and Galatea*.

⁷⁵ Winton Dean, "Bertolli, Francesca" in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 41–42.

Arias

1. “Se il cor mai ti dirà”

Act I, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: A minor – 3/4

Range: B3 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, BC

Prevailing emotions: consoling, feigned sincerity, uneasiness, giving false hope

Approx. duration: 4:45

Dramatic situation: Finding Medoro alone, Dorinda declares her growing suspicion of a budding romance between Medoro and Angelica. In an attempt to avoid hurting Dorinda’s feelings, Medoro, who was formerly interested in the shepherdess, says that he is obligated to Angelica since she nursed him back to health. Uncomfortable with the situation, Medoro continues in misleading Dorinda by saying he shall never forget her kindness or the feelings he had for her.

Translation: (A) If my heart ever tells you that I should forget you, answer it for me that is lying. (B) Only death can erase the memory of our cherished affections.⁷⁶

2. “Verdi allori”

Act II, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Andante larghetto

⁷⁶ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 159.

Key and Meter: E major – 6/8

Range: C#4 – D#5

Tessitura: D4 – C#5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: nostalgia, sentimentality, hope

Approx. duration: 6:45

Dramatic situation: Hearing that Orlando is enraged and in pursuit of the happy couple, Medoro and Angelica, who are hiding in the forest, realize they must quickly flee from Orlando's wrath. Before leaving to prepare their departure Medoro carves both his and Angelica's names in a tree as a witness to their mutual love.

Translation: (A) Green laurel trees, always joined keep our name just as united shall be our hearts. (B) And then tell to whoever sees it, by what hand, when and how it was upon you so well carved.⁷⁷

3. “Vorrei poterti amar”

Act III, Scene 1

Tempo marking: Andante allegro

Key and Meter: D minor – 12/8

Range: C#4 – F5

Tessitura: D4 – F5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: ambivalence, gentle, comforting, compassion

⁷⁷ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 174.

Approx. duration: 3:45

Dramatic situation: Medoro returns to Dorinda's cottage, asking for refuge from the ill-tempered Orlando. Dorinda admits that she wishes he had come back for her but realizes he is in great danger and agrees to provide him shelter. Medoro, thankful for her generosity, explains that his heart is no longer free to offer.

Translation: (A) I'd like to be able to love you, my heart I'd like to give you, but you know I've given it to someone else. (B) And if I gave you my heart, to a heart that is treacherous you wouldn't give any faith.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 183.

Chapter 6

Ariodante

First Performance:

Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London on January 8, 1735

Librettist:

Anonymous, based on libretto by Antonio Salvi, adapted from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*

Standard Countertenor Role:

Polinesso (a) – Maria Caterina Negri

Polinesso

Musical and technical demands: Four arias (two in Act I, one in Act II, one in Act III)

The role of Polinesso is a secondary role. The overall tessitura lies between C4 – D5 with frequent passing between the lower and middle registers and short trips into the upper range. It is common to find phrases ending in the lower register, so integration of chest voice is often necessary in order to achieve the recurring emotional affect of strength and pride. The melodic contour varies greatly from aria to aria, ranging from simple repetition of short triadic motives to leaps of up to an octave. All four arias have coloratura but the most challenging are found in his last two arias, “Se l’inganno sortisce felice” and “Dover, giustizia, amor”. “Se l’inganno” has three long bursts of rapid descending sixteenth-note triplet coloratura and the B section is an exercise in quick and precise text declamation, the entire section being set syllabically. “Dover, giustizia,

amor” has three long passages of mostly sixteenth note coloratura. Notably this aria has the highest tessitura, lying primarily in the middle and upper registers. “Spero per voi” and “Se l’inganno” possess a thicker instrumental texture than the other arias, which presents the challenge of being heard in the lower passages. In the first aria, “Coperta la frode”, the voice is doubled by the violins up an octave, requiring careful attention to articulation.

Character description: Polinesso, the Duke of Albany, pleads ardently for the love of Ginevra, who is in love with Ariodante. His secret motive is to use her as a stepping-stone to gain the throne of Scotland. After suffering a strong refusal by Ginevra, Polinesso plots to gain the throne through deceitful means. He manipulates Ginevra’s handmaiden, Dalinda, who reveals her love for him. Polinesso later plans to have Dalinda killed after she agrees to help him in the plot to ruin the marriage of Ariodante and Ginevra. Polinesso is characterized by prideful self-confidence mixed with a sly and slippery nature, a man consumed by ambition and a lust for power.⁷⁹

Singer who originated role: Italian contralto Maria Caterina Negri flourished between 1719 – 45. She made her debut in Bononcini’s *Trionfo di Camilla* in Bologna. She sang throughout Italy in operas of Vivaldi and Pergolesi. From November 1733 until the summer of 1737 she was a member of Handel’s company in London, singing in eleven of his operas, the serenata, *Parnasso in festa*, and a number of oratorio revivals. In addition to Polinesso, Handel wrote five other roles specifically for her, including Carilda in

⁷⁹ Winton Dean writes that Polinesso is perhaps the nastiest character Handel ever created.

Arianna in Creta, *Bradamante in Alcina*, *Irene in Atalanta*, *Tullio in Arminio* and *Arsace in Berenice*. Winton Dean observes that these roles suggest a singer of moderate competence, though an occasional aria demands an agile technique. The compass of her voice fell between A3 – E5 and she was often known to play male roles.⁸⁰

Arias

1. “Coperta la frode di lana servile”

Act I, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: C major – 3/4

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: vengefulness, spite, pride, jealousy

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Disappointed at being rebuffed by Ginevra, Polinesso forms a plot to use Dalinda, who has revealed her secret love for him, to take revenge on Ginevra and to foil her suit with Ariodante.

Translation: (A) If deception is covered in mere humble wool, it is shunned and detested and seen as fraud. (B) But it is praised as manly prudence if clothed in richer apparel.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Winton Dean, Daniel E. Freeman, “Negri, Maria Caterina,” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 340.

⁸¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 8–9.

2. “Spero per voi, sì, begli occhi, in questo dì”

Act I, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Allegro, ma non troppo

Key and Meter: F major – 2/2

Range: C4 – D5

Tessitura: C4 – C5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: longing, arousal, passion, pride

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Putting his deceitful plan into action, Polinesso assures Dalinda that if she helps him, he will renounce his earlier interest in Ginevra and turn his affection to her.

Translation: (A) I hope that you, yes, lovely eyes, on this day will heal my wounds.

(B) And to you, lovely eyes, I wish to devote the affections of my heart.⁸²

3. “Se l’inganno sortisce felice”

Act II, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: A minor – 4/4

Range: C4 – E5

Tessitura: C4 – D5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

⁸² Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 17.

Prevailing emotions: contempt, triumph, spite, pride

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Dawn approaches and Dalinda leaves Polinesso's chamber after he falsely vows to love her. After she leaves he gloats over the apparent success of his plan.

Translation: (A) If my deception comes out successful, I will forever shun honesty.

(B) He who desires only what is right, shall live always unhappy on earth.⁸³

4. "Dover, giustizia, amor"

Act III, Scene 3

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: D major – 4/4

Range: A3 – D5

Tessitura: D4 – D5

Orchestration: Ob 1, Ob 2, Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: Pride, courage, zeal

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Polinesso slyly requests the honor of appearing as Ginevra's champion after the King announces he will not see his daughter unless a knight appears as her defender.

Translation: (A) Duty, justice and love ignite in my heart, a desire for glory. (B) If the stars smile on such fair hopes, I shall be victorious.⁸⁴

⁸³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 28.

⁸⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 42–43

Chapter 7

Serse

First Performance:

King's Theatre, London, April 15th, 1738

Librettist:

Niccolo Minato, revised by Silvio Stampiglia

Standard Countertenor Role:

Arsamene (mezzo soprano) – Maria Marchesini

Arsamene

Musical demands: Six arias (three arias in Act I, two arias in Act II, one aria in Act III), one cavatina, one duet with Romilda (soprano), final coro

Arsamene is one of the higher Handel roles often cast as a countertenor. The overall range is from C4 – G5 and tessitura lies between D4 and F sharp5. The first aria extends up to G5, but is of short duration.⁸⁵ Having a countertenor sing the role of Arsamene proves an excellent choice in providing a contrast in vocal color since both *Serse* and *Amastre* are mezzo-sopranos. Arsamene has a fair amount of music but his arias are short in length with only two of them exceeding four minutes. Three of his arias are slow laments in minor keys. His last aria, “Amor, tiranno amor” is perhaps the most challenging for a countertenor with its excessively high tessitura and sustained high F

⁸⁵ E5 would suffice as an alternate note for lower voices.

sharps.⁸⁶ All three laments require an ability to sustain a legato line over a broken melodic phrase and all three laments possess wide leaps of up to an octave. The ability to sing both a supported piano and forte dynamic in the upper range is another prerequisite for singing this role. There is one short virtuosic rage aria in the second act, “Si la voglio”. This aria has one long passage of rapid eighth and sixteenth note coloratura, broken up with eighth note rests. The most challenging part of this aria is the sequence of wide leaps in the B section, especially the octave leap up to F sharp 5. As this aria has no instrumental introduction, it is the responsibility of the singer to set a clear and incisive tempo. Other technical demands for this role include executing messa di voce, the ability to trill and to quickly articulate text.

Character description: Arsamene is Serse’s brother and is secretly in love with Romilda who returns his affection. From the early stages of the opera the main conflict is that King Serse also desires Romilda and uses his tyrannical power both to remove his brother from the situation and to press Romilda into submitting to his will. Arsamene assumes the role of the tragic hero, who time after time undergoes trial and disappointment from Serse or his beloved Romilda. He is the one character who is steadfast in his love, never turning from his true feelings. Not until the middle of Act II does he exert a firm resolution to defy his brother and pursue his quest in winning Romilda as his wife.

Singer who originated role: Known as “La Lucchesina”, Italian mezzo soprano Maria Antonia Marchesini sang for two seasons in London for the Opera of the Nobility before

⁸⁶ When cast as a countertenor, this aria is often transposed down a whole step to D minor.

the company collapsed in October of 1737. She was contracted in 1738 for the autumn season at the King's Theater by impresario Heidegger. Handel was also hired by Heidegger to compose two operas for that season, *Serse* and *Faramondo*. Winton Dean writes that Lucchesina's parts in both operas, (Arsamene and Rosimonda) suggests a singer of limited accomplishment; her range encompassed A3 – G5 with a low tessitura.⁸⁷ In the case of Arsamene, five out of the six arias are in slow, triple or compound meter with only one requiring coloratura.⁸⁸

Arias

1. “Io le dirò che l'amo/Tu le dirai che l'ami”

Act I, Scene 2

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: D4 – G5

Tessitura: D4 – E5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: pride and triumph

Form of aria: Shared aria with Serse, Arsamene sings second verse after Serse departs

Approx. duration: 3:30 (both verses)

Dramatic situation: Serse hints to Arsamene that he desires Romilda as his consort.

Arsamene, jealous of his brother's interest, replies that due to her low rank she would be

⁸⁷ In addition to the roles in *Serse* and *Faramondo*, she most likely created the role of the Witch of Endor in Handel's oratorio *Saul*.

⁸⁸ Winton Dean, “Marchesini, Maria Antonia,” in *The Grove Book of Opera Singers*, ed. Laura Macy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 302.

an inappropriate choice. Suspicious of his reply, Serse ignores his brother's advice, asking him to talk with Romilda on his behalf. Arsamene refuses, feigning modesty, so Serse goes off to do it himself. Left alone, Arsamene assures himself that Romilda's affection belongs to him.

Translation: (A) You shall tell her that you love her, but she won't listen to you.

(B) That beauty that you covet only to me shall belong.⁸⁹

2. "Meglio in voi col mio partire"

Act I, Scene 5

Tempo marking: Andante

Key and Meter: E minor – 3/4

Range: C#4 – E5

Tessitura: E4 – E5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: jealousy, frustration, resignation

Approx. duration: 2:20

Dramatic situation: Serse comes to tell Romilda that he desires her to be his queen.

After she declines, Serse's original suspicion of an already existing romance with Arsamene is confirmed. Serse decides to banish his brother from court after Arsamene admits to his relationship with Romilda.

Translation: (A) With my departure your jealousy will be more easily abated. (B) I shall go to my death, and leave you to enjoy your freedom.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti*, edited by Marcie Stapp, vol. 2 (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2007), 69.

3. “Non sò se sia la speme”

Act I, Scene 12

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: A minor – 3/4

Range: D4 – E5

Tessitura: E4 – C5

Orchestration: Unison Vlms, BC

Prevailing emotions: sorrow, anxiety, anguish, grief

Approx. duration: 4:00

Dramatic situation: Arsamene, desperate to assure Romilda of his steadfast love, gives a letter to his servant, Elviro, saying that he promises to visit her secretly. After giving Elviro the letter, he sings of his despairing predicament.

Translation: (A) Is it hope that keeps me alive or is it my bitter pain? (B) I know that my soul has been sighing ever since the joy of my heart was taken from me.⁹¹

4. “Quella che tutta fè”

Act II, Scene 7

Tempo marking: Largo

Key and Meter: F minor – 12/8

Range: C4 – F5

Tessitura: E flat4 – Eflat5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

⁹⁰ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 73.

⁹¹ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 82–83.

Prevailing emotions: anguish, contempt, rejection

Approx. duration: 3:20

Dramatic situation: Arsamene meets with Elviro to ask about Romilda's response to his letter. Elviro tells him that he gave the letter to Romilda's sister, Atalanta, who in turn told him that Romilda was now in love with Serse. Heart-broken and betrayed, Arsamene again despairs and bitterly asks heaven to punish Romilda for such cruelty.

Translation: (A) That woman, faith incarnate, who so languished in love for me, no longer is mine. I have lost her heart. (B) What does heaven imagine she will do? Does it not know, in its severity, how to punish a guilty person for such transgressions?⁹²

5. "Per dar fine alla mia pena"

Act II, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: G major – 3/4

Range: D4 – D5

Tessitura: G4 – D5

Orchestration: BC

Prevailing emotions: defeatism, despair, humiliation, isolation

Approx. duration: 1:20

Dramatic situation: Alone, Arsamene wishes that his life would be taken so his suffering would end.

⁹² Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 104–105.

Translation: (A) To put an end to my suffering, who will kill me for pity's sake?⁹³

General comment: This short cavatina is interrupted by Serse, who enters on the final cadence.

6. “Sì la voglio e l'otterò”

Act II, Scene 9

Tempo marking: Allegro

Key and Meter: G major – 4/4

Range: D4 – F#5

Tessitura: D4 – F#5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: outrage, contempt, vengefulness

Approx. duration: 3:00

Dramatic situation: Serse interrupts Arsamene's melancholic cavatina and consoles him with the news that he shall have the wife he has long desired – Serse now thinks Arsamene has long desired Atalanta. Confused, Arsamene insists that it is still Romilda he loves and that he is determined to win her.

Translation: (A) Yes, I want her and I shall have her! (B) And if heaven will not shine upon me, I shall invoke the evil monsters and horrendous ghosts of Cocytus.⁹⁴

⁹³ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 106.

⁹⁴ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 109.

7. “Amor, tiranno Amor”

Act III, Scene 4

Tempo marking: Larghetto

Key and Meter: E minor – 3/4

Range: E4 – F#5

Tessitura: E4 – E5

Orchestration: Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, BC

Prevailing emotions: anguish, sorrow, dismay, bitterness, resignation

Approx. duration: 4:30

Dramatic situation: Having now been reconciled to Romilda, Arsamene hides when Serse suddenly enters. With veiled threats, Serse presses Romilda to accept him, and in desperation she agrees if her father gives his consent. When Serse leaves to ask Ariodate for his daughter’s hand, Arsamene emerges from hiding, bitterly accusing Romilda of betraying him.

Translation: (A) Love, tyrannous love, for me you have no pity, to make me languish always is too much cruelty. (B) No heart or breast alone could endure such suffering; either grant relief to my grief or give me freedom.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Castel, *Libretti*, vol 2, 125.

Appendix 1:

Handel's Soprano and Alto Opera Singers and the Male Roles They Originated

(Organized by voice type and gender)

Soprano Castrati	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Andreoni, Giovanni	Tirinto	<i>Imeneo</i>	1740
Baldassari, Benedetto	Fraarte	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720a
	Timante	<i>Floridante</i>	1721
Berselli, Matteo	Tigrane	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720b
	Orazio	<i>Muzio Scevola</i>	1721
Carestini, Giovanni	Teseo	<i>Arianna in Creta</i>	1734
"Cusanino "	Mirtillo	<i>Il pastor fido</i>	1734b
(c. 1704 – c. 1760)	Ariodante	<i>Ariodante</i>	1735
	Ruggiero	<i>Alcina</i>	1735
Conti, Gioacchino	Meleagro	<i>Atalanta</i>	1736
"Gizziello"	Sigismondo	<i>Arminio</i>	1737
(1714 – 1761)	Anastasio	<i>Giustino</i>	1737
	Alessandro	<i>Berenice</i>	1737
Frilli, Stefano	Rodrigo	<i>Rodrigo</i>	1707
Majorano, Gaetano	Faramondo	<i>Faramondo</i>	1738
"Caffarelli"	Serse	<i>Serse</i>	1738
(1710 – 1783)			
Pellegrini, Valeriano	Nerone	<i>Agrippina</i>	1709
"Valeriano"	Mirtillo	<i>Il pastor fido</i>	1712a
(c. 1663 – 1746)	Teseo	<i>Teseo</i>	1713
	Lepido	<i>Silla</i>	1713
Scalzi, Carlo	Alceste	<i>Arianna in Creta</i>	1734
	Silvio	<i>Il pastor fido</i>	1734b

Alto Castrati	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Albertini, Giuliano	Narciso	<i>Agrippina</i>	1709
Annibali, Domenico (c. 1705 – 1779)	Arminio	<i>Arminio</i>	1737
	Giustino	<i>Giustino</i>	1737
	Demetrio	<i>Berenice</i>	1737
Baldi, Antonio	Scipione	<i>Scipione</i>	1726
	Tassile	<i>Alessandro</i>	1726
	Trasimede	<i>Admeto</i>	1727
	Oronte	<i>Riccardo Primo</i>	1727
	Medarse	<i>Siroe</i>	1728
	Alessandro	<i>Tolomeo</i>	1728
Berenstadt, Gaetano (1690 – 1735)	Adelberto	<i>Ottone</i>	1723
	Flavio	<i>Flavio</i>	1723
	Tolomeo	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	1724
Bernacchi, Antonio (1685 – 1756)	Lotario	<i>Lotario</i>	1729
	Arsace	<i>Partenope</i>	1730
Bernardi, Francesco “Senesino” (1686 – 1758)	Radamisto	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720b
	Muzio Scevola	<i>Muzio Scevola</i>	1721
	Floridante	<i>Floridante</i>	1721
	Ottone	<i>Ottone</i>	1723
	Guido	<i>Flavio</i>	1723
	Giulio Cesare	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	1724
	Andronico	<i>Tamerlano</i>	1724
	Bertarido	<i>Rodelinda</i>	1725
	Lucejo	<i>Scipione</i>	1726
	Alessandro	<i>Alessandro</i>	1726
	Admeto	<i>Admeto</i>	1727
	Riccardo	<i>Riccardo Primo</i>	1727
	Siroe	<i>Siroe</i>	1728
	Tolomeo	<i>Tolomeo</i>	1728
	Poro	<i>Poro</i>	1731
	Rinaldo	<i>Rinaldo</i>	1731b
	Ezio	<i>Ezio</i>	1732
	Sosarme	<i>Sosarme</i>	1732
	Orlando	<i>Orlando</i>	1733
Bigonzi, Giuseppe	Nireno	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	1724

Alto Castrati cont.	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Grimaldi, Nicolo “Nicolini” (1673 – 1732)	Rinaldo	<i>Rinaldo</i>	1711a
	Amadigi	<i>Amadigi</i>	1715
Pacini, Andrea (b. 1690)	Tamerlano	<i>Tamerlano</i>	1724
	Unulfo	<i>Rodelinda</i>	1725
Perini, Giuseppe	Fernando	<i>Rodrigo</i>	1707
Urbani, Valentino “Valentini” (fl. 1690–1722)	Eustazio	<i>Rinaldo</i>	1711a
	Silvio	<i>Il pastor fido</i>	1712a
	Egeo	<i>Teseo</i>	1713
	Silla	<i>Silla</i>	1713
Female Sopranos	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Azzolini, Caterina	Evanco	<i>Rodrigo</i>	1707
Durastanti, Margherita (b. 1690)	Radamisto	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720a
	Vitige	<i>Flavio</i>	1723
	Sesto	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	1724
	Tauride	<i>Arianna in Creta</i>	1734
Galerati, Caterina	Tigrane	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720a
	Fraarte	<i>Radamisto</i>	1720b
	Tarquinio	<i>Muzio Scevola</i>	1721
Female Altos	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Bagnolesi, Anna	Valentiniano	<i>Ezio</i>	1732
Barbier, Jane (1692 – 1740)	Arcane	<i>Teseo</i>	1713
Bertolli, Francesca (d. 1767)	Idelberto	<i>Lotario</i>	1729
	Armindo	<i>Partenope</i>	1730
	Gandarte	<i>Poro</i>	1731
	Argante	<i>Rinaldo</i>	1731b
	Melo	<i>Sosarme</i>	1732
	Medoro	<i>Orlando</i>	1733

Female Altos cont.	Role	Opera	Season premiere
Dotti, Anna	Orindo	<i>Admeto</i>	1727
	Corrado	<i>Riccardo Primo</i>	1727
Marchesini, Maria	Arsamene	<i>Serse</i>	1738
Merighi, Antonia	Gernando	<i>Faramondo</i>	1738
Negri, Maria Caterina (1705 – 1744)	Polinesso	<i>Ariodante</i>	1735
	Tullio	<i>Arminio</i>	1737
	Amanzio	<i>Giustino</i>	1737
	Arsace	<i>Berenice</i>	1737
Vanini-Boschi, Francesca	Ottone	<i>Agrippina</i>	1709
	Goffredo	<i>Rinaldo</i>	1711a
Vico, Diana	Dardano	<i>Amadigi</i>	1715

Appendix 2:

Treble Male Roles in Handel's Operas

(Organized in chronological order by opera)

Opera	Singer Who Originated Role	Role (voice type)
<i>Rodrigo</i> (1707)	Stefano Frilli Caterina Azzolini, "La Valentina" Giuseppe Perini	Rodrigo (s) Evanco (s) Fernando (a)
<i>Agrippina</i> (1709)	Francesca Vanini-Boschi Giuliano Albertini Valeriano Pellegrini	Ottone (a) Narciso (a) Nerone (s)
<i>Rinaldo</i> (1711)	Nicolo Grimaldi, "Nicolini" Francesca Vanini-Boschi Valentino Urbani Giuseppe Cassani	Rinaldo (a) Goffredo(a) Eustazio(a) Mago (a)
<i>Il Pastor Fido</i> (1712)	Valentino Urbani Valeriano Pellegrini	Silvio (a) Mirtillo (s)
<i>Silla</i> (1713)	Valentino Urbani Valeriano Pellegrini Jane Barbier	Silla (a) Lepido (s) Claudio (a)
<i>Teseo</i> (1713)	Valeriano Pellegrini Valentino Urbani Jane Barbier	Teseo (s) Egeo (a) Arcane (a)
<i>Amadigi</i> (1715)	Nicolo Grimaldi "Nicolini" Diana Vico	Amadigi (a) Dardano(a)
<i>Radamisto</i> (1720)	Margherita Durastanti Caterina Galerati Benedetto Baldassari	Radamisto (s) Tigrane (s) Fraarte (s)
<i>Radamisto</i> (1720) 2 nd Version	Francesco Bernardi "Senesino" Matteo Berselli Caterina Galerati	Radamisto (a) Tigrane (s) Fraarte (s)

Opera	Singer Who Originated Role	Role (voice type)
<i>Muzio Scevola</i> (1721)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Caterina Galerati Matteo Berselli	Muzio Scevola (a) Tarquinio (s) Orazio (s)
<i>Floridante</i> (1721)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Benedetto Baldassari	Floridante (a) Timante (s)
<i>Ottone</i> (1723)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Gaetano Berenstadt	Ottone (a) Adelberto (a)
<i>Flavio</i> (1723)	Gaetano Berenstadt Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Margherita Durastanti	Flavio (a) Guido (a) Vitige (s)
<i>Giulio Cesare</i> (1724)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Margherita Durastanti Gaetano Berenstadt Giuseppe Bigonzi	Cesare (a) Sesto (s) Tolomeo (a) Nireno (a)
<i>Tamerlano</i> (1724)	Andrea Pacini Francesco Bernardi “Senesino”	Tamerlano (a) Andronico (a)
<i>Rodelinda</i> (1725)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Andrea Pacini	Bertarido (a) Unulfo (a)
<i>Scipione</i> (1726)	Antonio Baldi Francesco Bernardi “Senesino”	Scipione (a) Lucejo (a)
<i>Alessandro</i> (1726)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Antonio Baldi	Alessandro (a) Tassile (a)
<i>Admeto</i> (1727)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Antonio Baldi Anna Dotti	Admeto (a) Trasimede (a) Orindo (a)
<i>Riccardo Primo</i> (1727)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Antonio Baldi Anna Dotti	Riccardo (a) Oronte (a) Corrado (a)
<i>Siroe</i> (1728)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Antonio Baldi	Siroe (a) Medarse (a)
<i>Tolomeo</i> (1728)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Antonio Baldi	Tolomeo (a) Alessandro (a)

Opera	Singer Who Originated Role	Role (voice type)
<i>Lotario</i> (1729)	Antonio Bernacchi Francesca Bertolli	Lotario (a) Idelberto (a)
<i>Partenope</i> (1730)	Antonio Bernacchi Francesca Bertolli	Arsace (a) Armindo (a)
<i>Rinaldo</i> (1731) 2 nd Version	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Francesca Bertolli	Rinaldo (a) Argante (a)
<i>Poro</i> (1731)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Francesca Bertolli	Poro (a) Gandarte (a)
<i>Ezio</i> (1732)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Anna Bagnolesi	Ezio (a) Valentiniano (a)
<i>Sosarme</i> (1732) (<i>Fernando</i>)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Francesca Bertolli Capioli	Sosarme (a) Melo (a) Argone (a)
<i>Orlando</i> (1733)	Francesco Bernardi “Senesino” Francesca Bertolli	Orlando (a) Medoro (a)
<i>Arianna in Creta</i> (1734)	Giovanni Carestini Margherita Durastanti Carlo Scalzi	Teseo (mz) Tauride (s) Alceste (s)
<i>Il pastor fido</i> (1734) 2 nd version	Giovanni Carestini Carlo Scalzi	Mirtillo (mz) Silvio (s)
<i>Oreste</i> (1734) (pasticcio)	Giovanni Carestini Maria Caterina Negri	Oreste (mz) Filotete (a)
<i>Ariodante</i> (1735)	Giovanni Carestini Maria Caterina Negri	Ariodante (mz) Polinesso (a)
<i>Alcina</i> (1735)	Giovanni Carestini William Savage	Ruggiero (mz) Oberto (s)
<i>Atalanta</i> (1736)	Gioacchino Conti “Gizziello”	Meleager (s)
<i>Arminio</i> (1737)	Domenico Annibali Gioacchino Conti Maria Caterina Negri	Arminio (a) Sigismondo (s) Tullio (a)

Opera	Singer Who Originated Role	Role (voice type)
<i>Giustino</i> (1737)	Domenico Annibali Gioacchino Conti Maria Caterina Negri	Giustino (a) Anastasio (s) Amanzio (a)
<i>Berenice</i> (1737)	Domenico Annibali Gioacchino Conti Maria Caterina Negri	Demetrio (a) Alessandro (s) Arsace (a)
<i>Faramondo</i> (1738)	Gaetano Majorano “Caffarelli” Margherita Chimenti Antonia Merighi	Faramondo (s) Adolfo (s) Gernando (a)
<i>Serse</i> (1738)	Gaetano Majorano “Caffarelli” Maria Marchesini “La Lucchesina”	Serse (s) Arsamene (mz)
<i>Imeneo</i> (1740)	Giovanni Andreoni	Tirinto (a)
<i>Deidamia</i> (1741)	Giovanni Andreoni	Ulisse (a)

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